MOUNTAIN PLAYMATES

HELEN R. ALBEE

The Riverside Press Cambridge

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MOUNTAIN PLAYMATES

BY

HELEN R. ALBEE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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The Riverside Press Cambridge

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TO MY PLAYMATE

I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled
Above the green elms, that a cottage was near,
And I said, "If there's peace to be found in the world,
A heart that was humble might hope for it here."

MOORE.

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AN INTRODUCTION

Go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not.

We came unto the land . . . and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

NUMBERS xiii. 17, 20, 27.

AN INTRODUCTION

THERE are great compensations awaiting those who have spent their youth in a level, inland country. If one has reached maturity before he stands for the first time in the presence of the sea or mountains, the impression left is as clean cut as an intaglio; crisp and sharp in detail, it makes an imperishable memory. It is a distinct loss to have the edge of sublimity dulled by too great familiarity, especially by the familiarity that comes from having grown up with an object, so that at no time has one experienced the delicious shock caused by a sudden surprise of beauty.

Such was my experience one bright May morning when alighting at a station in the White Mountains. At my feet sparkled a lake with undulating shores, specked here and there with wooded islands; on all sides lay hills almost approaching mountains in height; and in the distance, towering above the hills, rose peaks of the Sandwich range. It was a supreme moment of life, when the elixir of the air, the splendor of earth and sky, are intoxicating, and one is filled with despair that he cannot enjoy enough. Many times since have I stood at the

same station, but never have I been able to recover the ecstasy of that first glimpse. The hills have become dwarfed, the lake shimmers like every other sheet of water, the heavens have receded and no longer rest their arches on the distant peaks. Does Nature but once disclose herself in her true proportions to the unaccustomed eye? After one divine revelation does she shrink to the measure of the common gaze? or are eyes holden that we do not continue to see majestically?

We, who were accounted a pair of impractical Playmates, had come on rather a quixotic errand, against which friends had protested. We were on a tour of inspection to see if a certain abandoned farmhouse could be made habitable for a summer abode. Abandoned farms had lost interest after enjoying several years of popularity. People had long argued that if all the talk about them was true, the desirable farms had already been taken; and if not true, they were not worth investigating. Yet year after year a few pilgrims like ourselves journey thither to spy out the land, and quietly go in and possess it.

This little volume is not a belated eulogy of that time-worn subject, for abandoned farms are largely hypothetical; only those who have the eyes to see them can find them. To all others they are waste places without charm or possibilities — until the ingenious hand of another develops them. Neither

is this a humorous peg on which to hang ridiculous experiences, the petty vexations and annoyances of rural life ; nor is it an out-of-door book to enlighten an unobservant public about things which they ought to have wit enough to notice for themselves ; nor is it written in defense of economical living in the country, with tables of statistics to show the extent to which retrenchment can be carried ; nor how a living can be wrested from the impoverished, reluctant soil of New Hampshire. It is simply a chronicle of country life as lived by two people who believe men and women can realize the ideals and poetry of existence in the midst of an age of feverish unrest and commercialism ; who believe also that joy and conscious happiness are possible daily possessions ; who look upon any occupation of hand or mind as a pleasure and a blessing, and find in nature a constant inspiration and uplifting.

There was no hint of what lay in the dim and golden future when I entered a shop in the village to purchase lamps and matches, an absurd errand in view of the glorious sunlight around us ; yet these trifles have their uses when men descend from the mount and visions have departed. I felt disappointment and irritation as I glanced about the shop. Gauze tissues, flowers, fruits, and singing birds were the appropriate stock of an establishment in this paradise. It seemed incongruous that a small general store should have so glorious a

setting, and incredible that the inhabitants should require cough remedies, patent medicines, the stout blue jean overalls and rubber boots conspicuously displayed as if to offer irresistible temptations to the purchaser.

We drove several miles up and down hills, perilously steep to my level-bred eye, by blossoming orchards, under thickets of lilac blooms, and through dense woods. At the sight of each shabby house I felt my heart leap. "Is this the house?" I asked twenty times as a child on its first journey, and felt relieved each time to learn it was not; for the glamour of the morning was still upon me, and I forgot that we were going to an abandoned farmhouse and hoped that it might prove an enchanted castle.

Finally we turned into a narrow lane looking much like a wood road, and on being told this was our private entrance, I felt a quickened interest in each individual tree and shrub. At one side of the road a brook gurgled, while overhead the trees met in a leafy canopy through which the sunlight filtered. In my impatience to see the house itself, I was beginning to think this loveliness interminable, when suddenly we emerged from the semi-darkness of the forest and came out upon a great undulating field of thirty acres, in the midst of which was set the cottage. Driving as we had through wooded roads with only occasional views, this open clearing

presented an unexpected outlook. Before us lay a stretch of twenty miles or more across Happy Valley, over the lake, past low foothills to the mountains beyond, some of which were so distant as merely to break into the horizon line. The most imposing mountain of the range appeared to spring from the woods behind the house. Although we were on the top of a hill from whence we had this extensive view, we were in truth nestled at the foot of a great crescent-shaped range of mountains, thirteen of whose peaks loomed in sight, filling three quarters of the horizon. Nothing can give a more delightful sense of security than to be guarded by thirteen silent divinities circled about the hearthstone.

Have you ever gone into a country house unoccupied for ten years, to take its measure, as it were to see if it would fit into your life? If you have not, you have missed an interesting chapter of human experience. It is a question just at what point the art of housekeeping shall begin; at the broom, at the fire on the hearth, or at the arrangement of the furniture. Yes, each of these demands your attention first; but with twilight coming on, the bucket must be looked up and swung in the well before water can be drawn, the wood split before the fire can be laid, the lamps which appeared so superfluous in the morning must be filled, the house opened and aired, the furniture unpacked, the wrappings

and excelsior removed before the floor can be swept. The confusion and dust, the hurry and hunger, do not comport well with the ecstatic visions of the morning, but it is all life, — life with its sharp contrasts of dreams and work.

With patience and coöperation, order is at length secured; a fire crackles merrily on the hearth, a kettle hangs on the crane renewing a song long forgotten, lamps are lit, the table is laid, and a white bed beckons invitingly from the next room. At least a semblance of domestic comfort reigns, and thus ends the morning and evening of the first day in the mountains.

One of the cardinal points in the Playmates' Creed is that each day or event shall be made as picturesque as possible. What though it involve a little personal discomfort, that price is gladly paid if to the experience is added novelty or a touch of imagination. During that holiday week, instead of going to the hotel several miles distant, we chose to do the unconventional thing: to live in two partly furnished rooms of an unoccupied house, to cook over an open wood fire, and subsist on such things as we had brought, or could prepare easily, — eggs, beefsteak, and cold boiled ham. Truth compels the acknowledgment, however, that by the end of the week these staples had become so deadly monotonous that for months afterwards neither of us could summon the smallest relish for them. We

came to understand with what indifference shipwrecked men must view their fare when it consists of the same unvarying articles day after day. We learned in that brief week that to satisfy hunger alone man eats very little; that if tempting variety were withdrawn the consumption of food would doubtless fall off one half. Notwithstanding the discomforts we were well repaid in the novelty of our experiences. We broiled meat on an old-fashioned shovel with a handle four feet long, such as was used formerly to remove pies and bread from brick ovens. We drew hot coals to the front of the fireplace, and brewed such clear, delicious coffee as I have never tasted elsewhere.

Outwardly I learned and saw much that week, but more did I gain inwardly. Not only did I regauge my estimate of the essentials of life, but I discovered what are the necessities of happiness. The two points whereon the efforts of the human race concentrate are to secure the necessities of life and the pursuit of happiness. Widely as they seemed to differ, I found there is a striking analogy between the two that proves the latter is but a spiritualized form of the first. That week represents the only actual freedom I have ever known. Our life was as simple as a savage's; we were housed without becoming wardens of modern conveniences and needless adornments; we were sheltered without being entangled with dusting and

cleaning. For a week we warmed, fed, and clothed ourselves without a thought of human standards. We spent most of our time out of doors where there were no walls nor housekeeping.

Happy were those days free from furniture and bricabrac, when a few nodding plumes of lilacs in a green glass olive bottle were enough to make one evening a glorified memory. The harmony of color between the green and lilac was exquisite, and when the lamp was lit, I caught a ray of light which pierced the water with its gleaming shaft. For an instant the flowers were transfigured into splendid beauty, communicating their loveliness even to the bare room. On rare occasions we have these swift, unexpected revelations of the soul's capacity for enjoyment. In the measure that we are open to vivid impressions do the trifles of life yield our truest joys.

We finally accomplished the important duty of making memoranda of the length and breadth, the height and number, of everything in the cottage. Our memoranda looked a good deal like a builder's specifications, and calculations varied, showing there are both male and female forms of measurement. The male runs thus, 4′ 3″, while the female jots itself down with true feminine diffuseness, 4 feet, 3 inches.

Leaving a carpenter to make repairs, we took a brief farewell of the cottage and departed to make

the necessary purchases for it and to close our other house. We arrived at the old home in the midst of a driving northeaster, with the ocean beating against the shore and the fog-horn blowing. But there was a certain luxury about coming back to civilization that was undeniable. What paradoxes we are! We wish untrammeled freedom, and yet we love the things that enchain us. With supreme delight I took in every detail of the well appointed home, — the shaded lamps, the cheerful fires, the dainty tea-table decked with apple blossoms, the old blue china, and the trim maid smiling as she served us. I felt much like the prodigal returning to the lap of plenty. We had had a picturesque time, but was not this picturesque too, if for no other reason than its contrast?

THE GENESIS OF OUR PENATES

We coursed about
The subject most at heart, more near and near,
Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there.

TENNYSON.

THE GENESIS OF OUR PENATES

House furnishing is like unto a little leaven hid in a measure of meal, which in season leaveneth the whole lump. The primordial germ is generally a dozen silver spoons of ancient descent, though it may be a chair, or rug picked up at a bargain sale; or, as in the case of my Playmate, Adam, it was a pair of beautiful brass andirons he chanced upon while still a penniless student, without so much as a fire in his room. He stored this nucleus of his house furnishings many years before he had a hearthstone on which to place them. The two cotyledonous leaves this unhoused germ put forth were a book of Emerson and Ary Scheffer's Dante and Beatrice. Around this trio, one by one, as if in obedience to the law of attraction, gathered a Chippendale chair and a host of other antiques.

When we returned to the old home, I looked over the collection to see what could be spared without leaving a gap in its furnishing. The memory of those empty rooms and bare floors at the mountain cottage haunted me; for the time would come when a bunch of lilacs in an olive bottle would not sufficiently furnish and beautify the

house. There would be lapses when we should feel the need of rugs, draperies, and furniture. As our means were slender, the problem presented was worthy of serious consideration. Did I look with covetous eye on that Chippendale chair or the brass andirons, mentally placing them in the other house, a long-forgotten axiom would recall itself in the words, Things cannot occupy two places at the same time. So I closed my eyes to the temptations offered in the parlor, the dining-room, and the chambers, and devoted my energies to rescue work in the slums of the garret, the toolhouse, and the corn chamber, — the latter, a mysterious treasure-trove over the woodshed. Was there a dissipated wreck of a table, I took it firmly in hand and said, "Brace up; I intend to set you on your feet again, and shall put new life into you; there is a happy future awaiting those who behave themselves." Was there a chair with an amputated leg or disintegrated vitals, a little surgical attention, a few stitches and supports, an iron tonic in the form of nails and screws, made another creature of it. I have no signed testimonials, but I can show many illustrious examples of "before and after taking" my treatment.

With such good-will and purpose did I apply myself to reformatory work that the lame and halt stood without a limp, the infirm and decrepit assumed a jaunty air of youth, the tramps of the corn

chamber became useful and reliable members of our household. I must explain here that the attic, the corn chamber, and the toolhouse represented different grades of society: those of the attic were the most respectable of the lot, the old fogies fast outliving their day of comeliness; those of the toolhouse represented the unfortunate and disabled; while the corn chamber contained the outcast, the abandoned classes. An incongruous lot they were, after all distinctions were leveled, and I presume the station master thought them fresh recruits for the poor farm as he sent them aboard the train. Could he see them now clothed with dignity and new paint, bright cushions and shining cleanliness, he would pronounce my reformatory methods a success.

Adam assumed the attitude of the general public viewing and criticising some new form of charity. He would shake his head when I expressed all that I hoped and expected of my protégés. He tried to disturb my confidence in their integrity.

"They are too old," said he, "they will not stay reclaimed. You will see; they are a bad lot, and will relapse into former habits when you least expect it. What did you say you intended to do with that bureau?" he inquired, pointing to a degenerate, the very dregs of the corn chamber.

"I intend to use it," I replied stoutly.

"But how? You can't, it won't work; see — you can't budge the drawers," and with that he tugged at them without being able to open them.

"You will see in time what can be done with it; we will take it at any rate," said I, though to what possible use it could be put was not then apparent.

As the spirit of the true philanthropist delights to grapple with some peculiarly difficult case, so my enthusiasm rose when I looked on that bureau with its balky drawers, and felt if this obstinate thing yielded the peaceable fruits of usefulness later, it would be my crowning conquest. I had it set out in front of the toolhouse under a willow tree (for the elements could only add a mellowing touch to its indestructible frame), where I often paused to look at it, and then I would walk near and not look at it, using a hint gleaned from psychologists, that in our unconscious moments inspirations come. But I could not thus surprise any heavenly suggestion. It still remained the same inscrutable, unanswerable enigma.

There was another hopeless object of threescore years or thereabouts. It was a weak-kneed, sway-backed chair, a near neighbor and contemporary of the bureau. In the flower of its youth, this chair had never been a graceful ornament to society, but it still bore evidences of a strong constitution and ample capaciousness.

I approached the dictator with mellifluous words.

"By the way, I came across another chair; I want you to see it."

"I think we must have a carload already," he said with a smile.

But when he saw the chair, the smile vanished. "Really, my dear, there is a limit to prudent economy, and at this point I must protest; that chair is absolutely good for nothing. We have enough stuff already."

"Well," said I, strengthened by my recent conquest regarding the bureau, "I think we shall have to take it anyway." I was so enamored of its promise of comfort, I could not reconcile myself to part with the new-found treasure. "Suppose you take it down and set it with the other furniture, just to see how it looks."

"It is idle to talk about that chair; I think you must leave it behind," rejoined my practical adviser.

Then I thought to compromise. "Of course we could not use the chair, but it would be very nice in the kitchen for Ingrid." Ingrid was the cook.

"It was worn out years ago," said he, "and is not worth while considering," and to bring an amicable conclusion to useless argument he turned and walked downstairs.

Neither coaxing nor strategy could move him from his decision. But some women are dauntless when a principle is at stake. Now the second arti-

cle in the Playmates' Creed is that economy is the handmaid of the art of living; and here was a flagrant violation of our chief doctrine if we in pride scorned a humble thing we really needed. In the end principle conquered, as it always does, though in this instance the method was somewhat surreptitious. As the expressman was loading up the goods to take them to the station, I quietly induced him to put in the despised thing; and that chair with three feet in the grave, under the restorative influence of mountain air, blossomed out in a coat of ebony hue, and in due time bore two beautiful cushions of old pink, in token of gratitude for its emancipation from the dusty corn chamber. I wish to testify regarding my old friend that we are daily companions, and I jealously dispute its occupancy by another.

Having skimmed off a coating of household articles, enough, if spread thin, to cover the bareness of the cottage, with the addition of a few prudent purchases, we left the old house. But before launching upon the journey, I must relate the ultimate redemption of the bureau. It now holds the honorable office of a sideboard, and the actual steps of its transformation were these, — the unruly drawers were removed altogether and in their place a shelf was inserted by a carpenter; then a covering of tea-chest matting was neatly tacked on the outside, even on the two small drawers at the

top which were left for silverware. In lieu of a moulding, which we did not have, a finish for the edges was secured by peeling and splitting slender willow twigs which matched the color of the matting. Brass handles were fitted on the drawers, beneath which a brass rod was added ; from this fell a silk curtain of quaint pattern, hiding the shelves. Presto, what a change! We own nothing which has received the compliments that have been showered upon this rejuvenated bureau.

Before concluding this account of the second birth of our furniture, I must describe one very curious incident which it is impossible to explain except by the theory that inanimate objects have a growth of their own. Scientists aver that the law of crystallization is so imperative that if a crystal loses one of its sides, it straightway begins to repair the loss, and they cite one famous instance of a gem in the British Museum. Even though the word of scientists had been given, and I have a greedy love of the marvelous, I was not prepared for a full acceptance of this truth until we came to move a certain ancient lounge that was merely a rectangular framework with one end paneled as in the footboard of a bed. I do not wish to imply that I claim for other frameworks what I do for this unique species, as it is unlike anything I ever saw, and probably governed by laws strictly its own. I have every reason to believe the queer law which

obtains in the crystal world had been sporting with the lounge during a quarter of a century of retirement and inactivity in the garret; for try as we would, we could not get it down either by the front or back stairs, by one or the other of which it had certainly been brought up. Every effort was used to accomplish this impossible feat: we labored, we tugged, jammed our knuckles, and scraped the plastering off the walls; all advised, all talked at once; we grew angry (except my Playmate, who wore a look of concentrated thought) when our advice was not taken, but recovered ourselves when, on being tried, the suggestions proved ineffectual. The truth was, that lounge had grown — whether in length or breadth or in the fourth dimension we could not tell. Its periphery had extended until it had become an overgrown incorrigible, and doubtless if it had been allowed to remain in quiescence for two centuries longer would have filled the garret, and perhaps have flowered and borne a full crop of little ottomans pendent from its edges.

As I have before remarked, difficulties serve to heighten our activities, and we were planning to cut a way out, meditating a general demolition of that side of the house, when the adviser-in-chief suggested that the window sashes be removed, and by this means of exit the unwieldy frame was lowered to the ground. I steadied the rope while it careened downwards, recalling certain adventures in sacred

history, — the spies being let down by a cord from a window in Jericho, and a similar perilous descent of the Apostle Paul at Damascus, — and took complacent satisfaction in knowing we had ample Biblical warrant for our unusual procedure.

THE JOURNEY

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landscape round it measures ;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and meadows wide.

MILTON.

THE JOURNEY

Our ragged regiment was sent off finally, and the last night before our departure came. One's wanderings through a house to be left closed for months much resembles the movements of a horse in a treadmill. Round and round we went, the same bureau drawers were opened and closed twenty times to make sure there was nothing left behind. Twenty times the closets were peered into to find at the last moment an armful of necessary articles which refused to go into the already bursting trunks. I suggested that we begin on a new box, certain that we should discover enough to fill it by five o'clock the next morning; it was then nearly ten o'clock at night.

"Have you any idea how many we already have?" inquired my companion; "nineteen barrels, boxes, and trunks. I think that is enough for two people who are going away for a few months."

"It does sound so, my dear," said I appeasingly, "but numbers and statistics can be made to prove anything; there is nothing more deceptive. We must have another, as you certainly do not want to carry these things in your hand;" which remark

settled the fate of the twentieth box, and it promptly appeared. Then arose the necessity of finding quantities of other things to fill it, and so the search went on until out of sheer exhaustion my companion retired from the race.

As no one in the house was sufficiently responsible to undertake to awaken the others at four o'clock the next morning, I attempted to set the alarm clock. For some time I had been suspicious of the clock, but, as I had had no proof of its unreliability, I began to wind it in good faith. The clock must have been a distant connection of the Waterbury, for after making fifty revolutions of the winder for several minutes, I felt, though its limit of windation might be inexhaustible, enough had been done to last five hours. As I removed my hand from the winder, a steady ting-ting-ting-whirr-rr-whizz undid all my labors. Thinking I had failed to set the hand at the proper hour, I repaired the oversight, and wound it again and again; but each time, on the release of the winder, it turned itself automatically backward, untwisting every twist it had received with a diabolical whirr-whirr-rr-whizz. Many times I applied myself to it. I wound it a little, I wound it much, then I gave it only one twist. But whatever I did the clock undid with wicked alacrity.

"My darling!" said my Playmate in the midst of this uproar. His voice, though somewhat muf-

fled by feathers, pillows, and blankets, was never more expressive.

Adam never addresses me save in two terms, — my dear or my darling; but these simple words, like the few words constituting the Chinese language, vary in meaning according to the emphasis, the inflection, and position in a sentence. Coming from his mouth, these two words run the whole gamut of speech, and express all emotions save anger. He is never angry. Yet there was that in his particular intonation which demanded instant explanation of the racket going on. I tried to check the infernal machine in its mad career in order to explain, but the clock would have its little say out, and when silence again reigned I said, "This pesky thing won't work."

"Let me take it," said he with that superiority which rests so gracefully on man, and which is the never-ending source of admiration in woman. I meekly handed it over, glad to shift the responsibility. He wound, he twisted, he coaxed it in vain; the winder kept crawling back the moment he took his hand from it. At length he gave it but half a twist, and getting but a feeble response he said with triumph, "There, I have fixed it. It is all right now."

We slept the sleep of the wearied in full confidence that after so much argument the timepiece had been induced to perform its duty at four o'clock

A. M. At five we awoke to find that the perversity of matter in general, and machines in particular, is a stable quantity on which it is always best to count. The clock was blandly ticking away, blameless of having sounded an alarm, though its benign face betrayed no omission of duty.

Having made the journey once by rail, we decided it would be more interesting and profitable to drive to the mountains than again to take the cars, as modern travellers get but a meagre idea of towns in flying visions from a car window of shabby suburbs, freight houses, and factories, and see but little of the real character of the country in the levels and lowlands naturally followed by the railroads. With the glow of a June sunrise still in the sky as a fair omen of the future, we began the new life by seeking the picturesque in a drive of seventy miles that lay before us.

One feels the difference between lower New Hampshire and Maine the moment he crosses the line; the bald and dreary farmhouses along the coast of New Hampshire, with not so much as a projecting eave to break the grim severity, in some indescribable way become less exasperating just over the boundary, often mellowing into agreeable outlines, though still excessively plain and unpretentious. I think what irritates us in some New Hampshire houses about Rye, and elsewhere, is the defiance of the laws of symmetrical proportion.

They stand so tall and gauntly square, with a too sharp pitch of the roof; the angles are too acute, and the height is out of all proportion to the length and breadth. When one penetrates further inland, the houses are different. They are low and rambling, weather-stained and inviting. The various irrelevant additions and extensions mark the successive generations of owners as the concentric circles in a cross cut of a tree indicate its age. It is curious to note the subtle differences in New England farmhouses; they are constructed on the simplest lines and on much the same plan, yet some are as inhospitable and forbidding as others are gracious and homelike.

One house we passed was remarkable. In colonial times it was probably a celebrated mansion. It was majestic in proportion, three stories in height, with a flat roof, and three rooms in its frontage. A broad, low fan of the most graceful oval was over the front door. The house had been painted white once, but now was weather-stained, though in good repair. It was surrounded by noble trees at least two hundred years old, and rank, overgrown lilacs clustered about the lower story, and huge rose-bushes clambered over the windows. Closed blinds jealously guarded the family history; the darkness of the rooms preserved their secrets. It was just the sort of a house to rouse the imagination. At first sight we drove slowly, then stopped and still

lingered, fascinated by its remnant of elegance, its secrecy and suggestiveness. What an inspiration such a house would be to the weavers of tales involving mystery and possible crime! It seemed the embodiment of poetry, romance, and tragedy; with it one associated gay scenes, lights and music, love and intrigue, women in stiff brocades and powdered hair, men of knightly courtesy. I was glad it was closed entirely rather than that some squalid family should profane it by living in one corner, as so often happens to a neglected, fallen homestead. Whether occupied or deserted, this house will ever preserve an appearance of dignity; and we felt much as we should have done had we seen a faded colonial lady whose decayed fortunes forced her to end her days in an almshouse.

If any one doubts the free agency of mankind, let him journey through an unknown country until he comes to the point where the road divides, where no friendly guideboard determines which is the straight and narrow way. Free-will then becomes a burden to him, and neither honesty of purpose nor reflection serves to enlighten him. A board of directors would be a most useful body to distribute along country roads, and one of their chief functions might be to inform some of the sturdy country folk what town lies nearest to them and the shortest road leading to it. This might save confusion of tongues, for information gleaned along the way is

by no means unanimous. Women are better advisers than men, because they are less acquainted with the peculiar features of the landscape. They are more inclined to follow natural boundaries. To illustrate: —

"Can you tell me how to reach Wakefield?" called my companion to a man working in a field near by.

The man stopped his harrowing, and came and leaned over the fence in a friendly, deliberate way.

"That I can," quoth he; "you follow this road straight on till you see a big tree ahead, and then you turn at Deacon Brewster's place" —

"I don't know Deacon Brewster's place," interrupted Adam.

"Don't know Deacon Brewster's place?" repeated he; "you must be strangers, eh?" He eyed us with interest, then pulling his topography into shape again, he took a fresh start.

"Well, Deacon Brewster's place is a squarish field — no, 't ain't neither — it has a pint in one end; but come to think of it, the pint is at t'other end, so you wouldn't pass it nohow. You jest look for a big apple-tree with a big stone under it, and there you turn to the right; you can't miss it."

"But," interposed Adam, trying to strip from the conversation such excrescences as the deacon, his apple-tree, and the big stone, "can't you

tell me whether it is the first turn to the right from here, or are there more?" He realized his own language was growing a trifle vague and incoherent.

But the man was perfectly loyal to his own methods, and was not to be diverted from making use of his life-long observations. "I don't jest remember if it be the first turn or the third turn — that ain't of no importance; you jest do as I tell you, look for the stone under the apple-tree, and when you get there, turn to the right and go on till you come to a house with green blinds, and then" —

Here Adam's memory became overtaxed. "I am sure I can find my way. I thank you for your trouble," and we were off, looking with straining eyes for big trees, big stones, green blinds, and more than all for some other informant. With the exception of the informant we found all these objects, but there were no roads leading off; and where there were diverging ways these interesting features of the landscape were wanting, and in consequence we travelled at least ten miles out of our way that day.

One curious custom, confined almost exclusively to New England, is the local use of the word town for township. To the majority of the English-speaking race, the word town has a specific meaning, as the intermediate between a city and a village, all smaller places being called hamlets or

settlements. It is therefore confusing to those who have adopted the generally accepted meaning of the word to hear the inhabitants speak of the town of Albany, which consists of the usual quota of square miles devoted to a township, over which is scattered so sparse a population that at no place is there a centre congested to a greater degree than two or three houses, and often single houses are miles apart. Next to it lies the town of Tamworth, so called, consisting of four separate villages, South Tamworth, Tamworth Village, Tamworth Iron Works (which has of late years been called Chocorua), and Pequaket, each with a distinct post-office; yet the inhabitants, on being asked where they live, reply "In the town of Tamworth;" but, should a letter come directed to a stranger under a general address Tamworth, he would never receive it. It would be just as vague and misleading as if directed to John Jones, Carroll County. To those who are unaccustomed to see each little Jonah of a village not only willing but glad to be swallowed by a whale of a township, this is very ridiculous; they cannot see why the inhabitants do not accept the name of their post-office address. One swallow does not make a summer, nor ten houses a town, we argue, as we think, convincingly; to which they reply imperviously, "You do not understand this thing; it has always been so."

One other peculiar feature is the interminable

repetition of names in the small hamlets. Similar to the case of the Tamworths, there are Ossipee, Ossipee Centre, Ossipee Corner, Ossipee Valley, and West Ossipee, which for convenience are dubbed the Ossipees, just as a galaxy of fair sisters merge their individuality and are designated the Smiths. This vain repetition provokes investigation. It could not be owing to poverty of language, for outside of New England this custom is rare, except to designate the east or west, the north or south portions of a town or city that in its growth has extended on both sides of a river, or some other natural division.

I believe it is due to the conditions of the pioneer life, coupled with New England conservatism. In early colonial days, for many reasons, it was often desirable for a portion of a settlement to change its habitat, while still maintaining intimate relations with the parent stock. With a New Englander's love of tradition, what was more natural than that the new home should retain in some way the former name, with a slight addition to distinguish it? These clustering names of towns and villages bear testimony to the affectionate relations existing among our forefathers, who still wished to be identified with the original settlement though separated from it. In the West and South, where the settlers were not the offshoots of neighboring places, but were congregated from the four quarters of the

globe, they were not bound by ties of association and kinship; they had no wish to be identified in any way with each other; they struck out boldly for themselves and established their own names.

When we consider the many commonplace and often vulgar names given by Americans to their towns, their cheap assumption of foreign names, and their arbitrary and inappropriate application, we are glad that they had no part in the original formation of languages. The North American Indian, in this respect, is more identified with the oldest nations than are we, the youngest and in many ways Nature's most favored children. One recognizes the poetic quality which pantheism imparts to language. Everywhere the Indian saw the fresh imprint of deity on natural objects. He caught that inward voice of Nature which speaks to the listening ear. The figurative words he used to express the message were as cosmic in their force and simplicity as the objects to which they were applied: Agiocook (the original name of Mt. Washington), Home of the Great Spirit; Winnepeseogee, The Smile of the Great Spirit; Minnehaha, Laughing Water; Mississippi, Father of Waters. Indian names are sometimes harsh to us until we have learned their interpretation, when we are so struck with the truth of Indian observation that the sound is forgotten in the beautiful meaning.

For some inscrutable reason poetry and imagination have been strained out of us as a nation. Compare the foregoing Indian names with the following gleaned from a United States map: Steam Point, Yellville, Competition, Troublesome, Tombstone, Coffeeville, Smithville, High Lonesome, and scores equally as feeble and expressionless. It is painful to reflect on America's contribution to the English language, words which on first introduction have struck so discordantly upon the popular ear that they were long rejected as vulgarisms; and only after we had become dulled to them through usage were they reluctantly adopted by lexicographers. In no instance have they been words to express the deeper emotions, the grace or beauty of life, or fresh poetic thought. They have served the lowly function of denoting new commercial methods and inventions, new forms of industry, new conditions imposed by frontier life, or some unexpected political aspect; with the exception of technical terms, they have been coined generally in derision of some person, party, or creed. Malice, contempt, or ridicule too often lie at their roots. An interesting exception, which after all is no exception to this general indictment, as it has never been incorporated in common speech, is the ingenious coinage of words by imaginative children for their private use, as in the instance of a little group who invented single words to express nice distinctions of emotion

and sensation for which we have no equivalent, and are able to indicate only by circumlocution. With them a single word conveyed that feeling of dread one experiences in the dark ; and another served to characterize the peculiar sensation of having something rough in the mouth. Children, with their originality and vivid imagination, and greater freedom in their mental operations, are allied to primitive nations who have ever been framers of picturesque, exact, and forcible language. It is to be regretted that their piquant utterances have not been accorded a permanent place for the enrichment of our mother tongue.

I must sing the praises of an inn at which we passed a night. It was so immaculately clean that we felt we ought to step out of doors to brush the dust from our clothing. Pious books in defence of hell lay on the centre table, cheek by jowl with a volume of advice to the young person on the delicate points of courtship and marriage. A few letters were included in this latter volume to guide the unsophisticated and faint-hearted over the shoals of making and receiving an offer of marriage. Conspicuously framed over the mantelpiece was a letter written in a childish hand, which we were informed later in a hushed voice "was the last letter written by our only child who died at the age of ten years." Only among a genuine and simple-hearted folk would so dear a relic be thus publicly paraded, for

only among them is an honest interchange of sympathy with private griefs and joys assured.

Beyond description was the chamber assigned to us. Scrupulous neatness, evident pride in the adornments, exquisite care of its appurtenances were everywhere visible. The bureau, the toilet stand, the mantel-shelf, the walls, were teeming with souvenirs of silk, plush, and ribbon, none of which were too good for the use of the transient wayfarer. There were marvellous constructions made of thistledown, and though it was almost a year since the thistle could have borne down, it was as white and glistening as if plucked the day before. There was nowhere a hint of the moth and rust that corrupt; time's ravaging hand had long paused over a white plush photograph frame; everything bloomed in its pristine beauty. The chief ornament of the room was a stuffed peacock at least four feet high. Every feather looked as if just preened, and its enormous tail as if newly spread. Lest we might stray in an unwary moment too near this beautiful bird, we built a barricade of chairs about it, and peered discreetly at it from a distance. Was it in memory of the delightful tradition wherein the watchful eyes of Argus were transferred to the peacock that this birdie was placed to guard the slumber of guests? If so, it was the most delicate attention ever bestowed upon a sleeping stranger. Whether it was due to our sense of security obtained from the protecting

peacock, or the luxurious bed, or the brook trout served at breakfast, I cannot say; but we left the inn feeling we had been royally entertained, and have made several pilgrimages to it since.

But all country inns are not alike, as we found in our journeying. Most of them are dirty, tawdry, and ill-kept. They strengthened a theory I have secretly cherished, that the proper way to make such a journey is to take suitable provisions with you, together with a coffee pot, and when you have chosen some spot possessing a fair prospect, dismount, and build a fire under a tiny furnace constructed of stones, and brew your beverage, drinking it to the health of the sylvan deities. I presume this longing, still unquenched through any trial of it, is due to a thread of nomadism never entirely eradicated from our Anglo-Saxon texture, which betrays itself variously, sometimes asserting itself in restless wanderings over the globe in palace cars and Cunard steamers, in Arctic or African expeditions, or in changing one's abiding place from East to West. It is all one in principle, whether it manifests itself in the wish to brew coffee and partake of one's meals in the open air, or to take an expensive journey up the Nile and ride the camels of Egypt. We are an uneasy people, restive under civilization, ever in search of adventure and the unattainable.

At the table of a country inn we met a breezy,

bronzed man from under Sandwich Dome. After a hearty "How do you do?" across the table as he sat down, he launched into personalities, told us who he was, where he lived, where he had been. Having thus paved the way toward good fellowship, he demanded an equal return of confidences; who were we? where were we going? where did we live? As fishing is as safe a general topic among men as the weather is among women, Adam diverted the conversation to that quarter after each had located the other geographically, and had exchanged genealogies as far back as three generations.

"When you have leisure, how do you amuse yourself; do you ever go fishing?"

At this query the man laughed in a boyish way. "Well," said he, "you see I — I (with long falling inflection on that pronoun) came from Maine, born there in fact; and in Maine people are a serious lot, too much conscience; you know the New England conscience?"

We admitted we had often felt its warrings within.

"Well, over in Maine folks don't have as much sprawl to them as in New Hampshire; they don't believe in holidays; they say it is a sinful waste of time. But you see a man can't live without fishing, and he can't fish without taking a holiday," he said with a twinkling eye, "so when we wanted a

downright good time, we Maniacs used to come over to New Hampshire to have it. I came away from there years ago, because I like life and stir and fun, and I found a heap more of it in New Hampshire than in Maine. But I find right in the midst of a good time even now my conscience pulls me up short; I don't suppose I ever will get clean rid of it, but I 'm learning to enjoy myself a little more each year."

We were much drawn to this cheery man and thawed completely under his companionableness, which bore no trace of familiarity. It was a pleasure to hear him expound his philosophy of life, and by the time dinner had ended, we felt as if we had known him for years, and had yielded a promise to his urgent entreaty that we should come and spend a day with him some time, although it involved a drive of thirty-five miles.

As we neared our journey's end we saw a touching sight. Far away from any village, in the midst of a wild, rough country, and back from the roadside on the slope of a hill was a bit of green, velvety sward, inclosed by an iron fence with stone trimmings, and in this bit of green rose the white shaft of a single monument. Leading to the gate was a neatly gravelled walk, which ended at stone steps; it was almost the only piece of stone masonry we had seen on that long drive. The simple elegance everywhere visible and the loving atten-

tion paid to this lonely grave, shut in by forests, spoke more eloquently than any words of some heart that still fondly treasured memories of its dead.

WORKS AND DAYS

A home and country are the charm of life; but overmuch care is to men not life but labor.

JULIAN.

WORKS AND DAYS

THE third article of the Playmates' Creed is derived from our high priest, Emerson: "A man should have a farm or a mechanical craft for his culture. We must have a basis for our higher accomplishments, our delicate entertainments of poetry and philosophy, in the work of our hands. We must have an antagonism in the tough world for all the variety of our spiritual faculties, or they will not be born. Manual labor is the study of the external world. . . . The doctrine of the Farm is this, that every man ought to stand in primary relations with the work of the world, ought to do it himself. . . . When I go into my garden with a spade and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health, that I discover that I have been defrauding myself in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands. . . . Not only health but education is in the work. Labor is God's education."

Under the inspiration of these words we began our work of reclamation. The handmaid as an advance guard preceded us with soap and mop, we following at her heels with paint buckets and carpenters' tools. We painted floors, papered walls,

whitewashed ceilings. We repainted and covered the furniture, adding curtains, portières, and rugs to the cottage. When we ran short of rods for sash curtains, we sallied forth into the orchard, grown up to brush in place of trees, where like Jacob we pilled willow twigs and used screw eyes for fixtures, which served every purpose. When we lacked two poles for portières, my ingenious Playmate withdrew for the space of a minute, returning triumphantly with rounds from a superannuated manger rack in the barn ; then rummaging through the recesses of the attic, he came down bearing in his hand some ornamental sections of spools cut from an old weaving-frame. These, secured with long wire nails, made prettily turned brackets upon which our poles still rest. It was as if we had secured the services of the genii of the lamp and ring in buying the farm, for everything needful presented itself in some guise or other, and required only a little contrivance to make it fit our purposes. We were often surprised at the promptness with which material appeared the moment it was wanted. As we had only an empty house and barn and the fields to draw upon, we claimed it was the result of magic, and that we had come into possession of the wishing cap.

Where the rooms were not wainscoted, we tacked below the chair rails a deep dado of matting to match the paper. We covered the two upper panes

of our distressingly common window-sashes with cunningly contrived lattices, which deceived even the elect. To do this we took ordinary laths and split them, and made frames deep enough to cover two lights and fitted them to the window bands. Then we ripped up a discarded green splint shade such as our ancestors used to roll up with a cord, tacking these long splints, which were half an inch in width, at angles with the frame so that they made diamond-shaped divisions across each pane. At each point of intersection we set a large round button mould; the lattices were then painted white, and resulted in making our windows look as if the upper part were set with diamond-shaped, leaded glass. The transformation produced was inconceivable; it gave a modern touch to the cottage which distinguished it from all other farmhouses.

We placed panelled doors ornamented with brass hinges and catches on the old ovens, which we converted into receptacles for firewood. Having taken friends into our confidence regarding our plans, they evinced the liveliest interest in our progress. As some inquire about your health on meeting you, these good people would say on entering the house, "Have you done anything new since we were here last? We must see it." Mark the wording; it was never, "Have you bought anything new?" We made it a principle never to buy the smallest thing we could construct, and in

consequence our talents in that direction became enormously developed. Our bump of constructiveness threatened to preponderate all other faculties. We, who had been a rather studious, inactive pair, became proficient craftsmen in untried fields. Everywhere lay opportunity for full exercise of brain, ingenuity, and muscle. Better than gymnasiums, physical culture, or sports is the reclaiming of a deserted place for the development of the physique and for quickening the energies.

I, who had known only the ennui of city life and social amusements, had never conceived of the pure joy this fresh plaything brought. Hard as we labored, we never pursued any work after we felt fatigue, but would turn to some other project, involving different muscles, different methods. Thus our efforts were but the play of various powers. After working in the garden we rested ourselves with some indoor work, then we would drive to neighboring villages for provisions and to get the mail. By continual variety we forestalled any possible chance of monotony.

Plenteously as the corn chamber had yielded, there were still some articles of furniture that we lacked; so early one summer day we drove to a village eight miles distant to purchase them. Although this village is the centre of trade for miles around, it was not a busy mart as we approached. Everything wore a leisurely look that comported

well with the gentle flow of the river by the side of the road. We tried the door of the furniture store, but found it locked. We made inquiries at a house near by — for houses and stores mingled heterogeneously in this small village — and learned that the proprietor had gone off on a fishing excursion to be absent for days. Inasmuch as our chief object was to purchase a dining-table and chairs, — for since our arrival we had monopolized the kitchen table, the cook using store boxes for her needs, and the chairs we had brought from the other house were slowly recovering from an epidemic of paint, oil, and varnish, — we felt the necessity of taking back with us a few of these comforts.

"Is n't there some one around here who could let us into the shop and show us the goods?" we inquired.

"Well, yes," said a woman who answered our knock. "A man up the street sometimes goes in, but he is down country to-day; his father-in-law could, but he has n't got the key."

"Who has the key?" we asked.

"I don't know, but I 'll find out;" thereupon she disappeared. In about ten minutes an elderly man came out, fumbling a bunch of keys. "I 'm not sure, but perhaps one of these will answer."

We tied the horse and endeavored to preserve a calm serenity while he tried at least one hundred

and fifty keys. He had no sense of the fitness of keys, but applied indiscriminately big and little ones, when it was evident that only a very large one would serve. When he came to the end of the bunch he said apologetically, "I guess these won't do. The man who has got the key is working down the railroad track."

This was not particularly encouraging, yet it was the first bit of definite information we had received. "He will be back at noon, can you wait?"

We looked at each other in dismay; it was then only ten o'clock, and a score of things needed attention at home; but in our anxiety to secure something as a fruit of the morning's excursion, we decided to wait. Perversity is a large ingredient of human nature, for though we delight in spending a few hours in the woods or by the water and had been longing for a half holiday, yet the bare prospect of being forced to look at that river for two mortal hours was intolerable. But wait we must, so we sat down on the embankment and shied stones into the water, that last resource of the idle when they do not whittle. After drowning all the stones in sight, we wandered into the woods, grumbling at our enforced idleness. Of all the years spent in this vicinity, it was the only occasion when I felt time and leisure a burden.

We returned at twelve o'clock to find a festive group of men gathered about the store door. There

was the father-in-law who had n't the key, there was the man with the bunch but not the right key, the brother who had the key, and two others. When the portal was at length thrown open, the phalanx filed into a large wareroom well stocked with all kinds of household goods. We found what we wanted, and then came another hitch, — nothing bore a selling price-mark. In vain did the men apply themselves to decipher the hieroglyphics of cost; not one of the five could give a single hint as to the probable price of anything. They critically examined the cuneiform characters on every piece of furniture; entered into endless discussions about sideboards and parlor chairs, which we told them a dozen times we did not want; gave their opinion of what the table we wished ought to cost, though no two came anywhere near the same figures; in short, it was the most aggravating, ludicrous situation possible. We had come to the borders of the land of plenty, yet we were not able to go in and possess it. There was nothing to be done except to extend a vote of thanks individually and collectively to the five men for their disinterested attentions. We drove home to a late dinner and continued dining off the kitchen table until it pleased the proprietor to return to his business.

With some exceptions, this is a fair type of general business as conducted here. Every man has a trade of some kind carried on in connection with

his farming, but it is mere chance if you can find your favorite blacksmith in to shoe your horse. He is probably a mile up the road hoeing potatoes. The plasterer, the carpenter, and the mason may have been chosen as road menders at the spring election, and your work may be suspended at a critical moment and perhaps delayed for weeks while they do their spring planting or repair the highways. If a boot needs mending, you must wait until you meet the shoemaker — who is never at home — on the road some day, in the mean time taking the boot out every time you drive, in the hope of seeing him personally about it. The shoe is passed over the wheel with instructions. By the time it is forgotten, a storekeeper produces the boot, remarking, "Smith left this boot last week, and told me to give it to you when I saw you; I paid him;" and then you pay the storekeeper; so the cobbler's trade goes merrily on.

Competition and business rivalry are unknown. The simple integrity and trustworthiness of the people are notable; in illustration of which, the storekeepers when busy with one customer will often say to another in a hurry for his goods, "You know where the nails are kept, go out and help yourself; you can pay me some other day." The small value that workmen place upon their time and services is a surprise to those accustomed to pay city prices for the same work. How they are able to lay by anything out of their scanty earn-

ings for their old age is a puzzle ; but that they do, and are contented with their lot, is shown by the remark of one aged man who said with a beautiful simplicity, " We don't know what it is to have money, but we have enough. "

> "Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
> With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
> Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

After we had repaired the inside of the house, we turned our attention to the outside, which was in bad condition, and as a matter of economy as well as preference we decided to shingle it. In learning to shingle, I acquired a valuable accomplishment. We had employed two men to do this work, but they were slow and irregular in coming. As it involved only the sides of a low cottage, the work was not in the least difficult. To help matters along, Adam took a hand, and from the time he entered the lists I stood about and watched the work. As I always want to share anything he is doing, I volunteered my services, at which the workmen laughed.

" You can't work without a nail pocket," suggested one, as if it were an insuperable difficulty.

" I shall have one in about a minute," returned I, and presently emerged from the house with a gayly bordered towel with knotted fringe, pinned into the shape of a pocket. It answered very well, although the shingle nails had a way of poking their feet through the fabric and hung suspended by their

heads, making a spiky fringe all about the lower edge of this feminine device. I marked off a third of a course on one side of a shed, and completed it as quickly as my companions did theirs. Much elated at my wholly unexpected success, I continued to work during the morning, and at dinner I made a proposition to Adam.

"I can't see the use of having those men about; you and I can do this work as well as they. If we are going to do it, we certainly would rather be alone; then we can work when we feel disposed and stop when we please."

Before they knew it, the workmen were supplanted by a non-union journeywoman who had worked at the trade but one half day. The working force reduced by two had beautiful hours together, each seeing who could do the best work in the quickest time. Fierce competitions arose, in which neither yielded to the other the palm until the tape measure was stretched, which usually proved that we worked with equal rapidity.

A strange glamour hovers over work done with the hands; your own looks bigger, more imposing than another's, and certainly more carefully executed; but the other cannot see it that way. The beam or rather the shingle in his own eye distorts the vision in his own favor.

It is conceded that when men work too hard, the brain becomes dull, and in time their power of

enjoying diversions is destroyed, and this is one reason why I have continually sought to share Adam's occupations. When I thought it was time that he should be tired, I declared I was worn out, and suggested that we rest under some tree near by. Yet it was with reluctance we left our work. "Just hand me a few of those shingles," he pleaded, "and in about three minutes more I shall have completed my half of this course." During the brief reprieve, I became so engrossed with my own end of the line that we came nearer and nearer together, until we had not only finished the whole course, but had completed several more. We did tear ourselves away at length, and I got eggnog, or fruit and wafers, generally the thing that would take longest to eat, and we sat in the shade while we chattered and laughed; and then we began the shingling again, which was only play, interspersed with discussions on philology and Celtic literature between the strokes of the hammers.

Hearing of our pastime, friends drove up to see us, and they sat about watching the work and begged to have a hand in it. So alluring did the work seem to the summer idler that a shingling bee was proposed; but as we were not willing to curtail one jot of our pleasure, we did not encourage the proposal.

While there are no diseases peculiar to shingling, as there are to painting, caisson construction,

and other occupations, there are perils attendant upon it. The latter we encountered in the aggravated form of a nest of yellow wasps, which had preëmpted the unclaimed territory inside the wall over one of the windows. The country folk talk lightly of dangers and the ordinary risks of life, but I have yet to meet the man who does not speak respectfully of the yellow wasp. The mere intimation that you are harboring a nest of those venomous insects makes them eye you pityingly, as if you were already marked for misfortune. We discovered the wasps by accident in the early summer while driving a nail on the inside of the house, which was immediately followed by an attempt on their part to storm our castle. They beat against the window panes and screens, an angry, turbulent mob. Not knowing how near at hand was the day when their good-will would be important to us, we fomented their hatred by calling them out at all hours of the day by striking on the wall just over their nest. It was exciting to see the vengeance of such puny creatures in responding to an attack of an unknown and unseen enemy. This unequal warfare furnished us with much entertainment, but when our shingling had proceeded until we were close upon the enemy's encampment, it occurred to us it was high time to make a truce. Our worst fears were confirmed by neighbors who were ready to impart what they knew of the manners and cus-

toms of wasps, and the endless advice we received was unanimous on one point only, that it was impossible to show them the least quarter.

"Do they never sleep?" we inquired anxiously; for in our wish to surprise them unarmed, we were cowards enough to take any unfair advantage.

"Not that any one ever heard of," was the reply, accompanied by a significant smile. "You had better pour kerosene on them and set fire to them," which advice was but a modern version of the ancient fable of belling the cat.

While one may be justified in sacrificing his home by fire for the sake of roast pig (*à la* Lamb), we felt it unwarrantable in the case of yellow wasps, which are not strictly edible. Having voted this plan impracticable, Adam, armed with a crowbar, stole out stealthily under cover of the twilight, intending to lay bare the nest by removing a clapboard as they were bivouacked for the night. A crowbar manipulated at arm's length and aimed in haste at a point far overhead is apt to miss fire, and he retreated in discomfiture. Then he took recourse to scalding water. To throw water from a long-handled dipper with sure aim up ten feet and to the right is no mean art, but unfortunately one that he had failed properly to cultivate in his youth. Adam would have made an excellent amateur fireman, for he could play all about a mark without once hitting it; and we decided that hot water as

a projectile was a failure, except in the hands of an expert.

Active engagements ceased (the shingling in the mean time having been suspended entirely), and the white flag waved for several days while the powers held secret counsel, planning a new campaign. It was decided that the strategic position occupied by the enemy was impregnable; that he must be dislodged and the fight carried on in the open country. But to accomplish this required a concentration of our forces and skilful generalship. It was with much anxiety that I sent my little David forth to meet the enemy's host. The girding of my knight was of the greatest importance. It was with trembling hands that I buckled him into his coat of mail (a cheviot ulster with a cape), handed him his helmet (a straw hat of tremendous girth), and adjusted his visor (a veil carefully pinned down to his armor). Thick layers of cotton batting protected his hands and wrists, to which protection I kept adding, my fear having magnified the length and efficiency of the wasp's sting until I fancied it more than two inches in length. He was padded and wadded to the point of incapacity. Although I felt the gravity of the coming engagement, I had to laugh at the grotesque upholstery of the figure before me. Perceiving my mirth, my Playmate said with some bitterness, "I know what you are thinking: —

'O wad some power the giftie gie us.'"

"Oh, no," said I apologetically, "my mind is too much occupied to run in such trite channels; but since you call my attention to your appearance, you do look irresistibly funny." Then to make amends for my unrestrained peals of laughter, I tenderly pressed one padded hand and bade him Godspeed.

With manly tread, and eager for the fray, he strode forth to conquer. At the first plunge of his rapier (the crowbar), a cohort rode out to meet the champion; at the second, reinforcements appeared; and at the third, the whole army to a wasp drove straight at his hands and head as if knowing by instinct the vulnerable points. There is that in a yellow wasp making straight for one's head with its murderous buzzing that makes the strongest man turn and flee; and my knight turned and fled incontinently. He presented himself, pale and utterly routed, at the door, begging in Heaven's name to be admitted; a request granted only after he had performed elaborate gyrations to prove he was not secreting some spy in the folds of his voluminous armor. Although it had been a bloodless conflict, a brilliant victory had been scored, and it was not the wasp who bit the dust. Adam vowed he could face calmly the cannon's mouth, but to face those yellow devils again he could and would not. As a result we ate as much humble pie as the vanquished usually do; we suspended our shingling operations, and giving that part of the premises

the widest possible berth, we impatiently bided the time when it should please the enemy to evacuate its quarters.

That which constituted our truest joy was to go into the forest provided with a small saw, a hatchet, and an axe. Our motives in going were various; sometimes it was only for a stroll through the woods, where these implements served to bush out a path; sometimes it was for the exercise which the wielding of them would give; and sometimes it was for the purpose of bringing home material for construction. Whatever the ostensible purpose, the results were all one; we would set to work first with a little cutting here and there, as if to whet up an appetite for real exertion, and before we knew it we had fallen to in dead earnest. We lopped off the antlers of spruces and hemlocks, cleared out superfluous young saplings, trimmed up the underbrush, with a force and energy that compelled us to lay aside all our trappings, one at a time, — hats, wraps, collars, and ties. We could easily be tracked through the forest, here a jetted collar lying on a big stone furnishing a clue, there a sunbonnet, or a lace head scarf suspended from a branch; further on a coat or necktie indicated the trail. These various articles, as we gathered them up, helped us to escape from the labyrinth of the forest, as did Ariadne's thread in the olden time.

There is only one trouble in trimming the woods,

it leads to dissipation. It becomes a madness when it gets fairly into the blood. Every leisure moment you are impelled to run off and have a little hack; but it never is a little hack; it ends in going on and on, felling here a small maple, there a birch, an alder, or a young beech. More alluring is it than the quest of the rainbow. I believe the enthusiastic woodsman, if left to himself, would girdle the earth. It acts like a stimulant; under the spell of its influence one forgets time, fatigue, and hunger; he simply sees trees — trees — trees. As a constitutional for an hour before dinner when one has had a morning of steady writing or designing, nothing equals it; for the worker can never be languid and listless in the pursuit. It quickens the pulse, stirs the blood, thrills the body. It is almost impossible to tear one's self away. Often we have made a start for home, when one dallied, pleading for just two minutes more; the other, to keep employed, attacked a clump which proved more than he thought, and he in turn demanded favor; first it was one, then the other, who was the suppliant. Only those who have enjoyed such delights know the sequel, — the ravenous appetite, the profound sleep at night, the keen joy of living. As an education to the conscience it is unrivaled. There is no one to remind you of spots neglected, of branches left strewn about in disorder; but the spirit that pervades nature has entered into you, and you carry out the

self-imposed duty of clearing up the ground as scrupulously as if under the eye of a taskmaster. I think that flower of human labor, the doing well what will never be known nor reckoned to your credit, bears the finest and most satisfying fruit. It then becomes work for work's sake. Labor executed in the true spirit can never sink to the level of drudgery. God did not drudge when He made polyps and lichens. Perfection, utility, and beauty are as apparent in the lowest order of creation as in the highest. It is just as much an exercise of will power and right doing to perform what is called menial work as the more exalted. Whether it is irksome to you or not depends on whether you invest its necessity with dignity ; whether it proves debased or worthy depends entirely on your attitude toward it. A notable example of a lowly duty being elevated by a new spirit infused into it was the street-cleaning force of New York city. Transformed by white uniforms and a certain military discipline, it was lifted from being the most despised work a man could do to a dignified calling, one that was sought by men who once would have scorned it.

I have said that one of our motives in going into the woods was to get building materials. We endeavored to ornament our grounds with rustic work. For this purpose nothing is better than young spruces. We tasted a new pleasure when we went

into the cool, green woods in the early morning, chose our spruces, trimmed off the branches, and trundled the fragrant burden back in the wheelbarrow to build an ornamental arbor over the well-curb. The platform about the well was about eight feet square. To this we nailed uprights as a framework of what afterwards proved a perfect bower. We constructed a trellis extending around the back and two sides which lacked two feet of coming to the front edge of the platform. It was divided in panels modeled after Japanese fret-work, each panel being different. At intervals variously shaped apertures were left, some oval, one a spherical triangle. A canopy of panels covered it overhead. Then we made a flower bed outlined with rockwork to hold the soil; beginning rather close to the sides at the front of the platform, and sweeping around gracefully in a more extended curve, it formed a bed fully six feet wide at the back. In this we planted wild white clematis, Virginia creeper, nasturtiums, morning glories, and other brilliant flowering plants. At the end of two seasons the vines covered the trellis, except where they had been trained to follow around the openings, so that through this leafy screen we could get lovely views of mountains framed with the white fringe of the clematis, or the delicate bells of morning glory. At the front of the bed, on either side of the curb, were planted sweet brier roses, which grew so luxuriantly that they were

nearly eight feet high at the end of the second summer. The fragrance of the leaves and flowers was a delight, as we stood at the well-curb to drink. We used to keep here a small tub of water for the birds. All hours of the day we could see our friends poise on the edge of the tub, dipping a thirsty beak, afterwards flying to the top of the lattice to carol their thanks.

Another beautiful feature on the lawn was what we called the tuning-fork; for it was a section of a spruce-tree that had a slender trunk and two prongs like a tuning-fork. I happened to spy it in the woodshed, where it lay among other wood for fuel. It was firmly planted in the centre of a large, circular flower bed; over it we trained climbing nasturtiums and clematis, and round about the base we planted dwarf nasturtiums and white petunias. The petunias, lifting their heads high above the nasturtiums, gave a fairy-like aspect to the bed as they swayed lightly in the wind, making it look like a huge basket of flowers from the florist.

There were boulders about the house too large to be removed; one was in the shape of a long oval. This we bordered with nasturtiums, and in a few weeks it was wreathed with an imperial crown. In front of some boulders we set out young evergreens; others we partially hid with white and yellow daisies, goldenrod, and ferns; still another was beautified by a grapevine running over a trellis so

constructed that it served as a shelter from the sun to the natural seat which was hollowed out in the stone. This seat faced the mountain view, and made a charming nook for reading. We laid out a long bed of old-fashioned, semi-double red roses to outline the driveway as it curved around from the gate to the house. White and purple lilacs and pink cinnamon roses were distributed over the lawn. From the early spring, when fruit trees and flowering shrubs are so many nosegays against the forest trees, and when the lilacs are a shower of bloom, until the late autumn frosts, the house is embowered in color.

Near the house and spanning a slight ravine was a broad stone causeway, bordered with oaks and maples. We built a rustic fence along the sides, and trained vines, planted in the ravine beneath, up over the stone-work. In the shade of the trees we swung our hammocks, and brought our writing table and books on Sabbath mornings. Here on the green turf we spread our table for any out-of-door festivities. It was an ideal place to entertain friends on summer days with raspberry shrub and conversation. Through this cool retreat the wind always blows, and from the end of the green alley the landscape stretches away to the gates of the horizon. Such an outlook liberates the spirit; from this point of view the world is wide and all men are free and happy.

BUCOLICS

Ask me not whether my farm maintains its master with cornfields, or enriches him with olives, or with fruit or meadow land: the shape and situation of my ground shall be described to you at large. . . . There is a continued range of mountains, except where they are separated by a shadowy vale; but in such a manner, that the approaching sun views it on the right side, and departing in his flying car warms it on the left.

HORACE.

BUCOLICS

The early spring offered us many diversions. Our farm afforded continual renewals of the delicious excitement that extreme youth enjoys when life is still full of untried experiences. There was always something going on that I had never seen before; everything that was suggestive and instructive. I was a grown-up kindergartner going to school. There was so much to learn every day, it made me doubt if I had ever known anything previously. One of the most entertaining employments was to burn over the grass lands. Hearing of a man who perished in trying to burn over his fields alone just before we came to the farm, I felt my pulses leap with a sense of the possible danger of our enterprise. Armed with plenty of pine boughs to beat out the fire should it spread too rapidly, we started for the upper field in company with an additional man to help us.

A match was struck and a small blaze started. It was fascinating to watch the first blackened circles grow larger and larger, their edges lambent with tongues of flame. The jet black discs with red, orange, and yellow serrated borders delighted

my æsthetic taste. Like circles in water, the widening circles of fire burned nearer and nearer to each other until only a thin line separated them, and in another instant they flowed together and a different outline of light was made, eating its way irregularly; here consuming the dried grass in a flash, then proceeding so slowly that it became extinguished of itself. A light wind fanned the fire and kept the conflagration moving. At one time it threatened to leap a stone wall and consume the fern beds and young timber beyond. If the fire once reached the woods, it would soon get beyond control, so I was left behind to prevent the flames spreading too much on the hillslope, while my companions tried to check their progress in the underbrush. They were obscured by dense clouds of smoke that blew toward where they were working. I could hear them call to each other and beat the ground with the boughs. It seemed a trifle ignominious to watch my insignificant fires when they were perhaps in jeopardy. Not daring to desert my post, I reflected that it was wise to keep some one stationed outside of danger who, in case of extremity, could fly suddenly and rescue them from impending death, snatch them as brands from the burning. I planned all sorts of heroic deeds, but I could see plainly the hour had not yet come for action, as from time to time they emerged from the clouds of smoke. When I found they

were not making a brave fight for their lives and there was no chance whatever to play heroine, I found it somewhat dull to be left alone so long. Thinking it would be as easy to tend a dozen fires as one, I gathered up the matches for more extensive operations. It is not the simplest thing imaginable for a woman to strike a light in the open field, for shoe leather becomes slippery in treading on the grass, and with nothing except the smallest pebbles, less than half an inch in size, she is apt to feel the limitations of her sex. With great difficulty I got half a dozen fires started. As I watched them, I wondered if it were not some such scene as this that first suggested the idea of the black and gaping jaws of death. Where the fires were kindled, I half expected to see the earth yawn, and the flames eat their way into its very bowels, laying bare strata upon strata of treasure; but my eyes could discern no glimpse of precious ore. I played with these fancies until they bored me, then I sought greater excitement, and found it in starting fires at considerable distance from each other, and then stood in the midst of the widening circles that would in time unite at the spot where I was. As I saw them sweep towards me, hemming me in on every side, I tried to imagine the horrors of perishing in a prairie fire. At the last critical moment, I jumped for life.

Nothing is more curious than the unconscious

reactions one experiences against the silence and immobility of mountains. They urge young blood into a thousand indiscretions and revolts. Leading a quiet, pastoral life, I find myself delighting in the most unwonted things, — tragedies, disaster, hairbreadth escapes. I revel in wholesale slaughter of heroes and heroines in fiction. I jot down skeletons of wonderful stories, but as I reach the end no one is left alive to tell the tale. Running under a calm, serene exterior is a fiery, untamable passion for wild excitement, for roar of tempests, for rush of waters. All savage moods of nature strike a responsive chord ; but no mountain is high enough, no sea tumultuous enough, no chasm so deep, no storm so terrifying, as to satisfy wholly my fierce, insatiable craving for overwhelming size and force. In the languorous stillness of a summer day I imagine I hear the final crash of worlds, the hissing of innumerable seas scorched by suns, the death cry of a million souls. As we drive through wooded roads, my fancy fills them with unicorns and griffins ; I discover tracks of the Minotaur, and in the parasitic growth on a fir-tree I recognize the nest of the terrible roc. And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, these same mountains produce a calmness of soul, a repose, an unspeakable peace, so deeply satisfying that I could ask no greater gift than to sit in their presence and dream the days away.

During a pause following one of these breathless leaps, a real tragedy occurred. The burning of the grass had started a myriad of creeping things from their hibernations. They rushed forth, unable to save any of their effects, barely escaping with their lives. In the scramble that ensued, there seemed to be but one other spectator of the devastation beside myself. He was a corpulent spider of well-knit frame and swarthy complexion, — the kind I am always glad to have other people kill. In leisurely, pompous manner he strutted about, acting as if he were an insurance agent, sent to estimate the loss. He had a way of swinging up one grass stalk to take a bird's-eye view of the desolation, and then swinging unconcernedly down again. I could see he was making careful calculations of some sort. That he wanted to gather further data was evident, for again and again he tried to force his way onward, only to be beaten back by the fierce heat. At length he ran headlong out on a narrow stretch lying between two approaching circles of fire. I saw the madness of the act; I forgot it was merely a spider in peril; I thought of it only as life endangered. I called to him to return; alas! in my panic I forgot to use the spider dialect. I do not know why I stood so helpless in the presence of the approaching disaster. Had I lifted a finger, I might have saved him. While still gazing, I suddenly recognized my responsibility, but too late! for that

instant the spider rushed frantically up to the tip end of a dried herb, just as the flames leaped forward and licked up its stalk. Life is life to one who stands by and sees its wanton destruction. I felt as if a human being had been sacrificed before my eyes.

In the spring I had the opportunity of seeing the process of grafting, that mysterious transmission of life, which so few witness. It never ceases to be a marvel that a section of twig taken at random from a fruit tree, and inserted in a cleft of another tree of the same family, in the future should bear fruit conforming to the variety from which the tiny twig was taken, and not to that of the original tree. All the more wonderful does it appear, because the seeds of that same fruit when planted will yield any number of varieties, no two being alike. The apple, for example, represents the two great, anomalous principles of biology, persistency of type, and variation of species. Why is it, when most seeds are true to their species, that the apple-seed does not conform, but becomes a sport, while the smallest shred of a twig bears such integrity in its fibre that it invariably produces after its kind? Emerson says all Nature is but a symbol of spiritual truths. I have often wondered as I stood by grafted fruit what spiritual truth was involved in this strange paradox. We felt like arbiters of fate

as we trudged along by the side of the grafter and said, "We will make this a Gravenstein, and that a Red Astrachan, and the other a Baldwin." It sometimes occurred to me when arbitrarily predestinating a tree's career, that the tree itself might have a certain predilection of its own, and the reconciliation of our foreordination and its free will might be as impossible as the two conflicting doctrines of Calvinism. Destiny is stronger than man's choice — or a tree's.

After sawing off the top of a young wild apple-tree, the grafter took a Gravenstein twig, cut off a piece about three inches long, leaving a pair of strong buds on it, and whittled the lower end to a sharp wedge shape. Then a narrow cleft was made in the small trunk, the wedge inserted so that the eye of the bud was just above the smooth sawed surface, facing outwards. A little wax was rubbed around the bud and over the top of the amputated trunk, and one of the great miracles had been wrought. This redemption of humble material we observe in human life when Destiny lays her hand on a sturdy young man splitting rails or driving a canal boat and says, "You shall no longer split rails, nor drive these horses; you shall be President of the United States." She is ever filling the country-bred youth of the land with aspirations and grafting them as vigorous scions upon the various occupations and positions of honor in cities, and

has thus produced, in the course of time, the finest types of manhood that we have. Wild fruit is the best antiseptic for the corruption and effeminacy of cities.

As our fields abounded in young trees of various sizes, and as the work of grafting them with the choicest varieties of fruit had been begun some years before we had made our home at the farm, we had from the first season of our coming an abundance of early and late varieties, the trees having begun to bear heavily within four years after being grafted. Our neighbors had not been so prudent, and they had scarcely any but the wild, natural fruit. We, who had nothing else to give, found that such as we had was most acceptable, and it became our custom on summer days to drive here and there, leaving a basket of fine rosy Gravensteins or Red Astrachans, one day with the postmistress, the next with the minister, another with the station-master, or with our personal friends. In this way our garden, berries, and fruit gave as much pleasure to others as to ourselves. It was a pleasant courtesy to tuck a head of crisp lettuce, a bunch of celery, a bag of new string beans, or a box of berries into our friend's carriage as she drove away after a morning's visit; for the chances were that her garden, if she had one, was at least two weeks behind ours, and her vegetables not far enough advanced to eat.

Just how far plant life responds to affection and care is still a matter of speculation, but we are convinced in our own unpractical, unscientific minds that a great fact lies here. In illustration of this, a miserable little thread of a Virginia creeper, for several years before our arrival, had tried to struggle up a few feet from the ground near the front door. It continued to be a puny dwarf in spite of dressing and water, until, after more than a year of intermittent care, we took the vine in hand. We began to compliment it. We did not allow a leaf to unfold without remarking the event. From the moment the creeper breathed this new atmosphere of approbation and encouragement, it showed a different spirit, and realized it was on its good behavior. Daily we exclaimed at the growth, protesting we could not keep pace with such luxuriance; we fingered, trained, and withal loved it; and it really astonished us. In less than two years' time the vine grew at least fifty feet, spreading out and making lovely effects over our latticed windows. It covered the whole front of the cottage and a good portion of two sides.

"What a beautiful vine!" people would exclaim. "What do you do to it? We have a vine that we have tended for years and can't make grow."

"We love it," would be my reply; and then they would look at me with an incredulous smile, not understanding the truth. But really there was no

further explanation to give, for that was all there was to it.

I have noticed when we have admired some flower that did not grow naturally on our hilltop, that the following year it was there awaiting us, as if it had come in response to our wish for its presence. The same thing has happened in our lane. I am fond of young hemlocks, and a few have always bordered the driveway, though most of the trees were maples and beeches. We got in the habit of saying pleasant things about the hemlocks that were there, and used to take notice of them as we drove past, and this last year a lovely troop of them stationed themselves all up and down the lane in single file, and they nodded and waved in recognition as we expressed our delight to see them. We discovered, too, that we could scarcely kill things out, so determined were they to grow for us. A few lettuce plants were cast aside by accident, and chanced to fall upon an inhospitable stone heap, where there was hardly a morsel of soil; yet they grew and throve in spite of the fierce heat of summer, and finally forced themselves on our attention, furnishing us with a salad just before the heavy killing frosts. A neglected rhubarb plant had much the same history, after enduring the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. By accident a tomato can was buried in the garden and the seeds came up; but like the apple, they were inclined to sport, for

though they bore a quantity of excellent tomatoes, there was not a single can on the vines.

Since we were convinced that Nature was coöperating with us, we were never quite sure what her next proof of amiability would be. When Adam returned from a stroll about the grounds before breakfast, my query always was, "What fresh miracle has been wrought overnight?" There was invariably some wonder to relate, some evidence of Nature's appreciative recognition of our attention to her, if it was nothing more than the first flower of its kind laid at my plate as a delicate greeting from her.

One never can be wholly self-revealed until he has lived on a farm, where he makes such unexpected discoveries regarding himself. One morning we started out to pick wild strawberries. They were very plentiful and large; but I came upon a patch about six feet square that was absolutely red with them. I fairly gloated over them, thinking of my winter stores, and after feasting my eyes, began to pick. I picked and picked until I became cramped with the one position. I got up and strolled around to the other side, and picked again until tired. I could not see that the least impression had been made upon the bed. After various assaults upon it, and finally becoming wearied with the inexhaustibleness, I left the spot and tried elsewhere. It seemed such a pity to have this abun-

dance go to waste that I returned again and again, but was unable to endure it, and finally deserted it altogether.

"My dear," said I, rejoining Adam, "I see why a kindly Providence has made success in life a dear purchase. If it were won too cheaply, we should not prize it. We enjoy it much more when we have to scratch for a living," and then I told him of that depressing strawberry bed, and added, "If you know any spot where the berries grow ten feet apart, I should like to pick there; for then a bucketful would count for something."

Changing the conversation he remarked, "I saw a woman just now picking over there with a ten-quart pail."

I, who had been suffering from the gall of superfluity, experienced a swift awakening of greed. "You did?" said I. "What effrontery to come in our fields to pick! What did you say to her?"

"When she saw me, she scurried off into the woods and I followed her, but she was lost to sight before I could speak to her."

"Of course you would have told her to keep off our premises, that this is no longer an abandoned place, but private grounds," interjected I with wrath.

"By no means," returned Adam in his suave way. "I was going to say, 'My good woman, I am glad to see you here; help yourself, there

is enough for us all,'" and I saw he was in earnest.

"Yes," said I, with fine scorn, "and by the time she had culled the best of them to fill her insatiable pail, we should have had great difficulty to get a pint. You forget that I have to put up berries, and this is my crop for winter use just as the garden is yours. By the way," continued I, brightening to an idea, "since you feel so hospitably inclined, I can easily letter a large, neat sign which we can place conspicuously at the end of the lane on the high road: —

"'TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

"'I have a fine variety of all kinds of early and late vegetables. You are welcome to come up and help yourself. This invitation is particularly addressed to women with ten-quart buckets.'"

Then we both laughed, and he protested that the two cases were not parallel.

"No," retorted I, "there is just that difference which always exists between the *meum* and *tuum*."

This episode laid bare an abyss of greediness of which I had not believed myself capable. I had more berries than I could possibly pick, yet wished to dispute the surplus with my poorer neighbor. Verily, one must go on a farm to discover his infirmities. I may add in passing that my prophecy

was fulfilled; before two days had elapsed, our rapacious enemy again visited our fields, and complete devastation and waste marked the trail of her odious bucket.

Our fields and pastures abounded in fruits and berries of all descriptions. Ere we wearied of the wild and cultivated strawberries, which were the first fruits of the season, they were followed in quick succession by blueberries, red raspberries, currants, cherries, blackberries, plums, apples, peaches, and grapes. It was a renewal of childhood's happiest days to saunter forth, each carrying a tin pail, to spend a half holiday in picking berries. Life to us was so full of joy and nature of beauty that we scarcely knew whether it was best to look within and delight in the happiness that filled us, or to look without and enjoy the ever-changeful mountains and fields and lake; or to look up into the wonderful blue of the heavens and let ourselves be wafted along in an ecstasy with the slow-moving fleeces of summer clouds. Men cheat themselves when they make happiness a matter of memory merely, or of future expectation, instead of grasping it as an actual, living reality of the present moment; for memory tinges past joys with an indefinable melancholy, and future joys are shadowed by uncertainty. I believe a conscious recognition of perfect happiness the highest exercise of the soul, and compatible only with natural, simple liv-

ing ; a thing quite apart from the ordinary enjoyment of possessions, of friends, or of position. It is to come so near to the spirit of nature that egotism vanishes ; you are identified with the great life of the universe ; you are linked with the eternal forces, and their currents fill you with such an exhilaration that you feel an alliance with the bird in yonder tree, that from sheer joy welling up within must needs carol his note. You are permeated with the peace which lies in the heart of nature, and you look upon the flowers at your feet, the trees, the mountains, as kinsmen to whom you say, "I too am fulfilling the laws of growth and obedience, and I too find life sweet and satisfying." Such hours and days touch the high-water mark of human happiness. They prove that with the capacity of experiencing it once, one has a right to expect that all days should be serene, if he but placed himself in the proper attitude to receive the gift.

We used to wander here and there, now picking for our buckets, now eating from the bush ; one moment enjoying the landscape, the next examining some curious flower, moss, or insect. We often rested in the shade of a tree, letting the cool winds refresh us. My Playmate, with his head pillowed on his coat, related the strange happenings in the sky, while I chronicled terrestrial occurrences. Within a foot of me, as we sat under the tree, lay the mystery of the universe in epitome. Here was

inert matter, and matter animated by spirit; here was life, reproduction, and death, — the inexplicable series of mineral, vegetable, and animal; here was a theatre in which spirit, masked under various guises, played many parts in the ever-changing drama of life; it was a miniature battlefield where so-called religion and science could wage a bitter war; it was a pulpit from which were proclaimed the eternal, cosmic truths which will live after the clamors of both have passed away.

It was good to come at short range with a foot of ground. One acquired a new sense of relative values and proportions. The tiny, gray moss bearing its scarlet chalice was lost to view five feet away; and at that distance the grass-blade was insignificant, though it made a dense forest through which the ants and other insects had their familiar, shaded footpaths and their open, dusty highways. We realized what Titans we were as we strode with our three-foot paces over this microcosmic world. Man must shake its habitations and leave death and destruction with every footstep. Face to face with nature, he learns what an intermediate place he occupies, a giant to the ant, a pygmy to the tree, and an infinitesimal atom to the universe. Though he be the greatest man of his time, his coming and going is no more to the ages than the momentary passage of an ant as it toils by with a grain of sand, and then disappears from our vision forever.

As I have sat studying a flower, inwardly feeling its beautiful symmetry and perfect obedience to the law of its being, I have thought what a mistake man makes when he claims to be superior to the vegetable world. Can he show the same perfection, the same rectitude? Ah no; the flower, the insect, and the bird are truer and purer than he. I look upon them with reverence and say, "I would fain be your sister; your wisdom is simpler and more direct than mine; it comes so unsullied from the divine fountain that I would learn of you."

Nature's precepts are not merely admonitions to virtue and obedience; she gently leads up through form to spirit, from the tangible to the intangible. Many are her ways of emphasizing the immaterial world. At one time it will be by the inrolling fog from the ocean, on a sunlit summer day, that wraps the coast, the islands, with a thick impenetrable veil, and without obscuring the inland landscape, she shuts off the horizon, leaving the observer to believe that his little part of the world has got loosed from its moorings, and, drifting out into nebular space, he can stand at its edge and see suns and stars of other systems twinkle far off in the great white abyss at his feet. Again, she drops an illusory haze over the mountains, blurring their outlines, rarefying their solidity, merging them into the heavens, so that they lie like frail phantoms against the sky. Or she weaves about them walls of falling snow

and circumscribes with gray tissues of rain mists, and renders them invisible. Or, with the enchantment of vapors and light, she clothes the bare brown of the mountain sides with a mantle of amethyst, purple, rose, and violet. Or she constructs a simulacrum of the mountains, both in form and color, of clouds about their crests, and cries, "Behold, you who put your trust in vision, which is mountain, and which is cloud? One is no more real than the other." This thaumaturgist stoops and breathes upon the bare ploughed ground, and calls into existence a myriad of green, flowering things; she breathes again, and they lie a handful of white ashes. Her phantasmagoria floats before our eyes as silently and dreamily as the shadowy procession of clouds floats across the mountain sides; and as you look — it is gone. Thus does she play with the illusions of form, color, and matter. Nothing endures, nothing is absolute.

But more than anything else the song of birds lends an unreality to life. So unlike the persistency of objects that appeal to the eye, from which we may turn, and return and find them the same, one moment the air is filled with warblings, twitterings, and soft tremulos — and then a long hush and silence, during which one waits to hear it renewed — waits in vain — until it seems but a fancy, a dream; and unexpectedly, from some distant quarter, come the same cadences, vague, elusive, intangible — a

fleeting ecstasy, surpassing for the moment color, beauty, form — and the next instant dissolved into the clear ether.

The thistle bird I always associate in my mind with picking blueberries, and its proper background is a crescent-shaped range of mountains. There is a sultriness in its note that blends with the palpitating waves of heat that quiver over the landscape. Far away it sings, not once but scores and scores of times, a low running accompaniment to happy or contemplative conversation. I have pondered why a bird's note, so reiterative, so unintelligible in meaning, never wearies us as even a second repetition of man's utterances do. There are some people who unconsciously imitate the bird's method, and having told a story or made a statement, immediately repeat it. Whether it is for the further titillation of their dull sense of humor, or whether it is because they fancy the nice point of the anecdote may have escaped the hearer, one cannot tell. A bird's conversation does not so affect us. We often imprison him within our four walls for the sake of his delightful tautologies. I presume the cause of the different impression lies in this: words, language, address the reason, and as the mere sound of language contributes no pleasure to the sense of hearing, the ear does not take it into account, and the reasoning faculties are intolerant of that which does not stim-

ulate their activity; on the contrary, a bird's note addresses itself simply to the ear, or perhaps the imagination, which is no such plodder as the reason. It is a wise provision of nature that what is intended to appeal to the senses in a healthy state should be a source of sensuous delight.

The note of the hermit thrush affects both the imagination and the hearing. Like a chime of crystal bells it falls upon the ear; but the ear cannot enjoy enough, so the imagination takes it up and intensifies the pleasure. So liquid and supermundane is the song, it carries the listener upwards with its heavenly music and fills him with incommunicable thoughts. In my own mind it is associated with the aurora borealis, that with noiseless opalescent fingers sweeps the heavens as if they were a celestial harp. It lies in the future to reveal the melody that beauty makes.

Different is the song of the phœbe bird with its apparent sudden fits of irritability. On an apple-tree near the house one sits and sings every summer, as if calling to some one within doors, phœ-be? phœ-be? with long rising inflection and equal emphasis on both syllables; then as if tired and impatient with waiting, it sounds a short, quick descending inflection, almost eliminating the final syllable, phœ-be, phœ-be.

On our excursions we delighted in the diapason of woodland sounds, the faint low note of the wind

singing through the tall grasses, which was caught up and repeated in the wind swaying a single tree; later to strengthen and swell in volume as tree after tree caught the note, until the murmur of leaves was the same as that made by cascades of water. More thrilling than all is the sound of high autumn winds as they eddy and sweep through the heavens, rarely stirring the treetops. Then it becomes a play of fine unseen forces that rise and fall in rhythmic measures sweeter to my ears than any music. One must be on a high eminence to catch the harmony running through the roar and tumult. Between the long pauses come the high soprano swishes in the upper air, then dropping several octaves are played the bass notes of various trees as each variety catches the theme and adds its own tone. Again and again the melody surges and swells around us and dies away among the hills. Infinitely varied are the airs of nature. Trees sing differently under the strong hand of the northwest wind from the light touch of a southern breeze. The music from the crisp foliage of midsummer and early autumn is set to a livelier measure than is that from the tender leafage of spring. March airs have a martial ring compared with the lullabies of May evenings.

During this time, we were left sitting under a tree observing earth and sky. My Playmate probably wore a chaplet of oak leaves, pinned together with bits of stem, or he was adorned with a simu-

lation of long green ears, cropping out among his locks. Certain it was he looked more like Bacchus, or a satyr, or a dryad than the grave, dignified man as known to the lower world. There is nothing to me so delightful as to destroy the outward shell of reserve, and meet the children of men as if the world was still in its first youth. We left our pails behind and strolled on bareheaded, lest the leafy garniture should be disturbed, to explore our neighbor's fields and note where the different patches of strawberries, red raspberries, and blackberries grew. We mounted boulders to get more extended views, we tipped our heads sidewise to see the horizontal instead of a perpendicular coloring of the landscape.

I loved to lie down in the long grass, when my companion had wandered on restlessly, and pull it over me, and fancy I was dead and buried; that the sun still shone and the mountains continued their watch over the farm, but that I was down out of reach of the warm sunlight, down three — five — perhaps seven feet; that the daisies waved above me, and the ants still travelled in the dust of their highways; but where was I — the real ego — and what doing? Was the future a nothingness, a quenching of the hopes and aspirations kindled only to light the way through one brief span of life? Was it a blotting out of consciousness which perished long before the bones could moulder? Or would it prove a reëmbodiment of the living entity into a

new individual with a growing degree of perception, a more vivid memory that could in time recover visions of past emotions? Drawn by subtile ties of association, should I journey thither in some age to come, and standing by my own grave wistfully recall the memories of that happy time when we had once lived and loved and labored here? Or would the new life be but an awakening from the dreams of earth into a deeper consciousness, a more radiant fulness of existence, with more exalted joys and a more penetrating power of enjoyment, a response to an ever enlarging and more comprehensive environment? There was no morbidness in such reveries, no fear — only expectant curiosity which sought to anticipate the event. The summer wind waved the tall grass above me and butterflies hovered a moment and fluttered off, while I entertained the most fantastic, nay, agreeable speculations on immortality. For some reason my Playmate used to grow grave when I related my experiences, and did not encourage me to give details, and this added to the zest of the situation, for I felt I had been enjoying a forbidden sweet.

PAGAN RITES

And always year by year went well with them who began each year with thy worship; for mortals who care for the Immortals have themselves thereby the better fortune.

THEOCRITUS.

PAGAN RITES

THE fourth article of the Playmates' Creed is the least known though one of the most imaginative of Tennyson's poems. Strictly speaking, it is the only one of his that has an autobiographical tone, and yet it also abounds in allusions to nature.

For this latter quality it has been incorporated as one of our cardinal doctrines. The very limited knowledge on the part of the general public concerning this corner-stone of the Playmates' belief proves how small the sect is. I refer to "Merlin and the Gleam." In vain have we asked lovers of poetry, and particularly of Tennyson, if they were familiar with "The Gleam." They looked as blankly at us as if we had asked them to direct us to the Milky Way.

The circumstances under which I myself became acquainted with it were these. When we, as playmates, first began to breakfast together, we supplemented that matin feast with a variety of accessories. We made frequent inroads into classical dictionaries and, having dug out a myth, we dusted it off and served it with coffee. The etymology and definition of words made a course with the oatmeal, and as

some brew tea and coffee on the table, so we kept an unabridged dictionary at hand instead of an urn. But more than all, we fed on scraps of poetry, chiefly lyrics, whose short verses marked hygienic intermissions between bites, and the bites in turn made an admirable substitution for Selah. It was at one of these solemn festivals that I heard for the first time this poem; and read to the accompaniment of toast and oranges, I doubt if any one could listen to it indifferently. I grew so fond of it that we read the poem every day.

Soon after, we took an excursion to what is called, by courtesy, a mountain in Maine. We took "The Gleam" with us and read it on the summit, pausing long between the stanzas to take in the lovely view, which was bordered along the horizon line by the distant ocean. It was an ideal way for one to make his first ascent of a mountain; and as a souvenir of the event, we marked with the date and name of place the lines we thought most appropriate: —

> "Down from the mountain
> And over the level,"

for the homeward drive was over the level, under majestic elms, by watercourses, and through hemlock forests, seen for the first time in my life. So successful was the adventure, because of the touch of poetry added, that we took Tennyson along when shortly after we spent a half holiday on a

high bluff overlooking a broad river with its fine-grained, silvery sparkle, beyond whose banks rolled away green pastures where men were ploughing with oxen. Fruit trees were in blossom, and the leaves of early summer were unfolding. Sheltered from the wind by a rocky ledge, which formed a natural seat, fringed about by juniper bushes, ferns, and columbines, we read poetry — and "The Gleam," and marked the lines for the occasion: —

> "Streaming and shining on
> Silent river,
> Pasture and ploughland,
> Horses and oxen,
> . . . . . .
> Slided The Gleam."

"Some poems are for holidays only," says Thoreau, and this is one that has served to test the quality of our days and experiences. If on any occasion we were moved to read "The Gleam" and got the proper ring out of it, we marked that day with a white stone. If in any way the occasion was lacking in poetic quality, it could be detected at once by the false note made with the poem's harmony. Like the turquoise, which is said to lose its lustre when the wearer is out of health or in peril; or the fabulous Venetian glass that shivers in pieces when brought in contact with poison, this poem became the talisman of life, delicately measuring and registering the admixture of poetry and prose of our holidays.

The field in the rear of the house is bordered by a forest that crowds close to the gray stone walls. A set of bars admits one to this wood, and at these bars, against a background of pines and hemlocks, stand two canoe birches, extending their long, white arms over the wall to welcome the worshipper of nature to the ceremonies that go on within the shadowy depths. A carpet of moss has been spread down the leafy aisles of this temple to tempt the tired feet of those

"Who in sad cities dwell."

The light is dim in this cathedral, and the pillars are single shafts of white birches that diffuse a soft radiance amidst the diaphanous veils of hemlock boughs. Choirs of hermit thrushes and whip-poor-wills furnish music for the matin and vesper services, but almost any time during the day some music is heard: the low rustling of the wind through the transepts of the oaks and maples; the wild whistling of a gale; the peculiar roaring sound as of the tread of a thousand trampling feet, which heralds the advance of a storm down the mountain-side; or the patter of raindrops on the leaves. These are interspersed by periods of intense stillness, when you fancy you hear the pulses of the trees throb with their fulness of life and vitality. These silences are sacred, a sort of solemn sacrament to those who approach them in the right spirit. You

become more and more aware of the sentient, living creatures imprisoned in the trees, and of their dumb pleading for release. You feel the spell laid on nature is about to be broken by the loud proclamation through the silent arches, "The Great Spirit saith, Come forth," and Echo, who resides at the border of the wood, will take up and repeat the words, "Come forth."

Then oreads will descend in laughing troops from the mountain-side which rises just beyond the further edge of the forest. The naiads will then link their white arms together and rise from the depth of the lake and river. Awakening to the sound of universal joy and laughter, the dryads and hamadryads will be yielded up from their prison chambers and join the festival chorus, "Great is the Spirit who hath delivered us." With tingling veins and beating heart, you listen and wait — wait with quivering expectancy. But just at the supreme moment a noisy, chattering squirrel runs out on a bough overhead, looking at you impudently while he makes a sound like a metallic spring being wound up — and the vision has passed. The broad forest shines as green as before, and the sunlight dapples the ground at your feet; the trees have resumed their familiar appearance. Nevertheless, you feel that in those brief moments you have swept aside the veils, and have pierced beneath the shaggy bark, with which trees hide their emotions, and you have penetrated

the cherished longings, and have surprised the secret hopes, of the forest.

It was in this mysterious grove that we erected a small temple to the Muses. Nature had already chosen the spot and furnished the materials. We find in our operations that she has first prepared the way, and has only been awaiting our assistance to carry out her plans. This she contrives to secure by leading our feet near her unfinished work, and then artfully drops a hint as to further possibilities. It was thus she gained our attention regarding a temple she must have had long in mind.

In among the trees a boulder of considerable size had lain, from which a stone mason, with drills, wedges, and hammers, had taken several horizontal pieces for the underpinning of the cottage. In so doing, he had left a section exposed that resembled two stone steps, each about two feet and a half wide and twelve feet long. In the débris that lay about, almost hidden in the moss, pine needles, and leaves, were two slabs of granite exactly alike; one side straight, the other forming a long oval curve, resembling the arc of a circle. As we passed that way one hot July day, we were gently restrained and induced to gaze on these fragments. Psychologists say women are more open to spiritual and supermundane suggestions; certain it was on this occasion that I got the message first.

"My dear," cried I excitedly, — nature's sugges-

tions always excite me, — "you see those natural steps that have been left in that boulder?"

"Yes," replied he.

"And do you see those two curved pieces?"

He replied that the range of his vision also included the two curved pieces.

My vaulting imagination by this time had cleared all the fences, and I saw the whole thing completed. "We will have a stone bench like the Roman sedilia."

"I confess I do not quite follow you," said Adam, who has a patient, logical way of putting two and two together before he claims himself the happy possessor of four.

Now it is in just such instances that the clarity of my speech becomes muddled. My schemes are like Minerva springing full fledged from the pate of Jupiter. In a moment I see every detail of an enterprise in all its completeness, and to try to explain what is so self-evident to me is like opening a school to prove the axioms. I take it for granted another grasps the salient points as quickly as I, and as a result conversation is apt to be at cross-purposes in less than half a minute, when my volubility only tends to obscure rather than to reveal the new discovery. At this particular time the brilliancy of my conversational abilities suffered the usual eclipse.

"Why, just tip those stones up and you have it," exclaimed I.

"Have what?" demanded the other, who for many months had been training me to strip my speech of vagueness and incoherency (common feminine defects), and use the English tongue in a rational and intelligent way.

I talked a good deal, but my words tripped over each other and added to the confusion. At last, in desperation, I said, "Well, run along and get some crowbars and poles, and I will show you what I mean."

It is quite probable that I added, "Hurry up." I am apt to think it, even though the words are checked, because in my impatience to add grace to the farm, I chafe under a moment's delay.

It was a broiling hot afternoon, yet we worked like galley slaves. It is no small affair to persuade a stone of sedentary habits, six feet long, three feet wide, and six inches thick, to take a journey of twenty feet; but will power, in conjunction with crowbars and levers, is a potent influence even when the thermometer registers ninety-five. We conquered, wearing the streaming brow and flushed face of Olympian victors. The two slabs were set up end to end on their straight edge, the two curves forming a back to the whole length of the stone steps. In front of the steps was a place hollowed out by the removal of the slabs; this we filled with earth and leaf mould and carpeted with moss, making a centre of gray moss bordered with green.

Circled about the edge of this hollow was a hedge of young evergreens; overhead the trees met in a leafy canopy. Thus screened and roofed by natural tapestries rests a temple, consecrated to poetry and philosophy. Here we bring our favorite books and new volumes of verse; here we dare talk freely with those chosen friends who have passed beyond the conventional limitations of intercourse, requiring four walls and cushioned chairs to sustain the tone of polite conversation. Here we are sincere, and each addresses the heart of another. We can talk sentiment without sentimentality, philosophy without growing dull; we can wax poetic without becoming grotesque or fantastic. Nature infuses herself through whatever is said and done, and it is ever after memorable. Because of its seclusion and beauty, we have called this the Bower.

One day, while wandering in the vicinity, we saw something gleaming among the trees. Perceiving it was too large and substantial to be a wood nymph, we hastened to it, literally tearing a way through the thick underbrush. To our astonishment we discovered a huge boulder twenty-five feet square and fifteen feet high. This was a most unexpected find, for we thought we knew that part of the woods fairly well. It was inexplicable that we should have missed this boulder, having passed within a few feet of it a hundred times; yet there it was, an undeni-

able fact, too big to be the growth of a single night. Delighted with the prize, we secured an axe, a hatchet, and a saw to make a clearing about it. I never could explain how it is such undertakings fall upon the hottest days of the season, but they always do, and our impatience is too great for us to defer work until a more convenient season. On the north and west sides of the boulder we found a curious lichen.

It is interesting to observe the many ways nature indicates the points of the compass. The north is marked on boulders and trees by the lichens and mosses growing on that side; the northwest, by trees which are exposed in open ground inclining toward the opposite direction, bent thus by decades of the prevailing winter winds; this same direction is taken by the leaves retained on the beech and oak during the winter. In New England, at least, where storms come from the north and east, these points are clearly shown by the appearance of the trees after a snowstorm. The tree-trunks rise like alabaster columns, the boughs of pines, hemlocks, and spruces are entirely hidden under their white burden, and the branches of deciduous trees are delicately pencilled in white against the sky; the landscape is spectral and unearthly. Viewing the same trees from the south, all is instantly changed. They wear a familiar appearance with their dark trunks, and the branches show their

usual color and outline, except that the snow is piled up on each like a straight wall. The green needles of the pine are plainly seen through the snow lodged on each tufted branch. Every bank where the first flowers and berries are found proclaims a southern or southeastern exposure. The sunflower directs the traveller to the east or southeast. Lakes mark the west and south, from which the summer winds blow, by muddy, rocky, or precipitous shores, while the east and north shores are covered with sand thrown up by the waves.

The lichens found on the newly discovered boulder were of a muddy color on the upper side, the under side being a sooty black. These lichens were large, and in wet weather they became a lovely bronze green. The undulating edges were curled and twisted as only the deft fingers of a French milliner can twist her fragile creations. After we had cleared a broad swath about the boulder, we sat off a few paces, a limp but admiring pair.

"Is it not a beauty?" one would inquire for the fiftieth time.

"But is it not a monster?" returned the other, having remarked it only thirty-four times.

We had lapsed into a silent admiration, when a thought seized me. "We must christen it — have obsequies."

"But, my dear," corrected my literal Playmate,

who is fond of the study of philology, and does not like people to take liberties with language, "obsequies is scarcely the word. It means funeral services."

"It is a pity to have so fine a word restricted to so disagreeable a meaning," I protested. "In my private vocabulary, it means any impressive ceremony. I do not believe in limiting expressive words to narrow uses. We must have obsequies!" said I, rising. Neither of us knew just what conventional obsequies under unusual circumstances required, but we were sure the occasion would suggest its own suitable ceremonies.

First, we got a long ladder, which took both to carry, and set up, bracing it against the boulder. Then we returned to the house for water to christen it. As climbing a ladder up the precipitous side of a boulder is rather an insecure undertaking, we felt, under the circumstances, we might use for our font a humble but eminently convenient article, a tin lard pail with a wire bail. Two youngsters could not have entered with more earnestness into their mock ceremonies than did we.

We returned to the spot, one carrying the lard can, the other bearing "The Gleam." Between our laughing and the actual difficulties of climbing, there was very little water in the pail when we reached the top, which was so rounded at the edges and sloping that we could scarcely keep our footing

after we got up. I presume it was the first time the foot of man had trodden upon the rock, and it was a pleasure to think we were the first explorers of new territory within fifty rods of the cottage. It did not take long with our proclivities to decide its name. Neither of us wanted to perform the christening lest the other should laugh at him. At length it was agreed that Adam should open the services with "The Gleam," which he read with an impressiveness suited to open-air services. Then he closed the book, — a moment I had been dreading, for I had not the least idea how a pagan should perform the rite which was allotted to me.

He smiled encouragingly, and said, "Now it is your turn."

I gathered my scattered wits together, and taking a little water in the palm of my hand, I sprinkled it in the direction of the corners, saying with as sibylline an utterance as possible, "Merlin, I dedicate thee to minister to the pleasure and inspiration of poets. May the winds, when they come to sit on thy four corners, bear thither blessings gathered from the four quarters of the earth." After a fervent Amen, the services were at an end, but the congregation did not disperse immediately. We explored the top with its seams and crevices, and ventured various speculations and doubts regarding the glacial theory which undertakes to account for the presence of boulders in forests

miles and miles from cliffs or hills. In truth, the further it is removed from any possible cause or explanation, the more probable does the glacial theory become, so its adherents say. To our surprise we found a delicate flesh-colored flower, resembling in form and color the Alleghany vine or mountain fringe, a flower that does not ordinarily grow in this vicinity. I have seen only one other specimen, and that too grew on the top of a boulder. In neither instance did we analyze it, as is our custom when we discover a new plant.

We were interrupted in our examinations by our maid calling to us, and we descended to find visitors awaiting us.

One of the party seemed much amused, and remarked, "I inquired if you were at home, and the maid said you were, though not in the house; but that she would call you. I said, 'Do not go, they may be engaged and not wish to be interrupted.' I wish you could have seen the expression on her face as she replied, 'Oh no, they are just in the woods playing.'"

And then the visitor laughed as if she thought people of our stature ought to have outgrown such folly years ago. Alas, that people should ever get beyond the age when a big stone, a ladder, and a can of water are enough to throw a golden halo about the afternoon, for these are sufficient talismans to admit them to the inner sanctuary of the sylvan gods.

Near the house, in a green field, is another boulder, fifteen feet square, covered by a grapevine which has grown so luxuriantly that it has run out over the trees standing close by, and also has covered an arbor built to support it. As we prize a vine more for its luxuriance than for the quantity of fruit it bears, this vine has never been pruned back, and forms a wild tangle with a hopvine that mingles its trailing festoons with those of the grape. In the autumn, when the grape hangs full of purple clusters, and is entwined with long sprays of yellow hops, it looks as if the votaries of Ceres had erected here a shrine to her, and wreathed it with garlands. I doubt not that she actually presides over our fields and forests, and has shed a benign influence on our crops and orchards. As the gods are wont to visit the haunts of men but once a year in person, this kindly deity, knowing the sincerity of two worshippers, deputed the daily exercise of her guardianship to another. I know not how long this vicegerent of Ceres had been there within the shrine, but it was not until our second year that we discovered it. Attracted to the spot by the scent of the grape flowers, a perfume more sweet and penetrating than any that I know, save the night-blooming cereus, which it much resembles, we lingered about the shrine until the twilight had fallen, and when the moon arose we saw within the darkness of the inclosure some-

thing white. None but a pagan would have discovered in the object before our eyes a representative of the gods; for it looked very like the trunk of an apple-tree, entirely denuded of its bark, the smooth white texture of the wood closely resembling the muscular development of the human body. The top had been twisted off nine feet from the ground, and two branches the size of a man's arm were left, one of which extended outward, as if in blessing; the other was the exact likeness of an arm raised upwards, showing the crook of the elbow joint. To complete the striking similitude, two small branches cut off close to the trunk were surrounded by the only bark left on the tree, and represented two dark eyes in the upper part, which closely resembled a head and face.

Coming upon this Titanic form unexpectedly, it was so ghostly in the moonlight that we shivered as if we had seen an apparition. We speculated whether the arms were raised in blessing or imprecation. When we looked about and saw the fruitfulness of our fields and orchards, and again sniffed the sweet incense that was wafted to heaven from the grape blossoms, we knew we were on holy ground. Reassured by its countenance, we approached nearer. I laid my ear to its trunk on the spot where anatomy declares the heart ought to be, to listen to the pulsations. I recognized in it a friend come to counsel and protect us in our soli-

tude. I have confidence in its wisdom, and now when we need advice, or are perplexed, I stand in the presence of the Oracle and lay the problem before it. The answer is never confused nor obscure, though others declare they do not hear it. Bound by the vows of secrecy imposed upon all participants in the Eleusinian rites, we do not reveal the utterances of the Oracle. To those who have not profited by its wisdom, it still remains a tree.

Besides these two boulders, which have become historical in the annals of the Playmates, there were many others on the farm in former times, which were used to furnish the stone slabs for the underpinning of most of the farmhouses in this vicinity. One of the first owners, who had meted out the granite with judicious economy, happened to return to the neighborhood, and when he saw the huge blocks that had been set into the foundations of houses that had been built since his departure, he grew exceeding wroth. "It is a sin, — I tell you it is a downright sin," exclaimed he, "to waste good stone that way. Why, those granite blocks are fit to be used for the corner-stones of heaven." We agree with him, and have done what we could to make those that were left into tabernacles.

We have other ceremonies which we observe with a chosen guest. One is to fell a tree in his honor.

Just as the king of Ashantee sacrifices a score of victims for the amusement of his court, so we, tyrants of our petty field, appoint a tree for slaughter, and then the word of command is given to the Lord High Executioner of the Woods, "Off with its head!" We indulge in this cruel pastime only in the fall of the year, when the act, which primarily is to serve up a pleasurable excitement for our guest's delectation, may also have secondary, economic uses, in that the victim, when dismembered, may be used to kindle our winter fires. I presume the keen delight we take in the destruction of these inoffensive subjects is due to a savage instinct still lurking in our blood, and partly to the intoxication that comes from the exercise of unlimited power in controlling the destiny of a created thing. When this wicked mood is on, we walk the forests as autocratic tyrants, and tauntingly say, "Shall not the potter do what he will with his own? It is only by our royal grace and clemency that any of you are standing to-day. Take heed, take heed, that you do not tempt us by boasting too recklessly how many cords of fuel you contain, how many thousand feet of lumber."

Nothing stirs this passion so much as to hear the tearing, creaking, and crashing sound uttered by a giant as it falls prostrate. Like the Roman emperors of old, we stiffen our sovereign thumbs upward, indicative of letting the merry slaughter go

on. This is a mood repented of when we step about among the fallen, and measure their magnificent length, and get a true estimate of their strength and dignity. The bead has passed from our cup of pleasure. We see only the cruel wantonness of the deed, and we register a yearly vow that in the future we shall let our sixty acres of woodland stand, even if we have to buy fuel from the neighbors. I remember the pang I felt when we ourselves had felled a small spruce-tree, not more than six inches in diameter, to get from it material to make an ornamental finish to a rustic fence. When we computed its age in the concentric circles of the trunk, and found the growth of twenty-five years had been ruthlessly sacrificed for the sake of yielding us about a foot of its length, it seemed worse than extravagance: it was sinful and unjustifiable.

When we have sated our taste for destruction, we seek to do penance by planting trees on the lawn. It is only when you wish to choose a tree for special culture that you can judge fairly of its merits and symmetry. All trees look well when dotted about in the fields and woods, but when you come to choose, you discover all trees are not born free and equal, that some have either inherited or developed unwarrantable peculiarities, and you see abundant reason for discriminations. One is not altogether shapely, another has a double top, a third has a

malformation of its spine and will be a hunchback, a fourth is anæmic, and so it goes, until you feel the judgment passed by the Creator upon his work some time ago, "It is all very good," does not apply to the young spruces and hemlocks of the nineteenth century.

We had one visitor who maintained an extraneous relation to our work and plans, yet he, too, fell under the spell of the place when we proposed to set out some trees in honor of his visit. He was a scholarly man, with white hands and fastidious tastes. When he was called upon to select a tree, the grave responsibility of the act weighed upon him. He flitted from one to another as if he were a nervous butterfly in a conventional black coat, undecided where to alight. Each having made a choice, we wished to have a hand in digging up our own, though the actual work was done by Adam, who has a certain power of divining just where the main roots extend underground, while another would hew and chop them to pieces. Like Malcolm's forces in Macbeth, we emerged from the woods, each bearing his tree before him. The selection of the spot where we wanted our particular tree planted was as important as the choice of the tree. Throughout these debates, we could see the interest of our guest growing, and it was with genuine delight that he got down on his knees before the spruce of his choice, to tuck in the soil with the

utmost tenderness about the roots. He carefully gathered dry leaves to mulch it, and then as he stood by it a moment longer he quoted: —

> "If I could put my woods in song
> And tell what 's there enjoyed,
> All men would to my gardens throng,
> And leave the cities void."

In one way or another, Nature thus captures those who visit this farm, and compels them to pay some form of tribute to her.

The most romantic ceremony conducted on the premises was held one brilliant moonlight night in September. A congenial party of six had taken tea together, and were circled about the wood fire that had been lighted to add to the cheer rather than from any necessity of warmth. In the conversation that ran on, mention was made of the names given by summer residents, in this vicinity, to the various abandoned farms they had purchased. We said we had not decided upon a name for ours, the features were too varied to suggest a title having peculiar significance. One of the group, an artist, who had taken a vivid interest in our doings, said, "I think the name suggests itself, or ought to have done so to Playmates. Why not call it Playfield?"

We agreed provisionally to its adoption. A playfield it had certainly been since the day of our arrival, and Playfield it should be until some other

name seized our fancy. This cautious reserve was due to the fact that we had already adopted with enthusiasm half a dozen names, and in consequence our letters had come so variously addressed that we ourselves had grown uncertain where we lived, or how many country places we had, and we looked with distrust upon such decisions as transient. Perhaps a formal christening would sober our volatile minds into more steadfastness, and certainly a more auspicious time would never occur again, so we hastily made our programme. We took a quaint blue and white china dish, round in form, tall, and shaped liked a font, and with it borne at the head of the procession, we went in a body to the well to draw fresh water. It was the most glorious night of the season, the white moonlight filtered through the vines and flowers, covering the trellis over the well, and shadowed their black silhouettes on the ground beneath. All about us, hanging from every grass blade, was the gleam of dewdrops, and the scent of flowers filled the air. Across the gray beds and against the walls of the house fell the shadows of the taller flowers and shrubs. Only the largest stars had congregated as witnesses in the blue sky overhead, and they twinkled in approval of the group gathered about the doorstep. Adam stood a little in front of us with the font in one hand, while with the other he sprinkled the step, saying, "Playfield, I baptize you in the name of all the

kindly deities who guard our hilltop. May you ever be the abode of happy hearts." Each of us added a blessing as we invoked peace and happiness. Then we proceeded to the shrine of the Oracle. We poured libations at its feet, and anointed its brow, while we gave thanks for the bounty of the fields and garden, and implored further blessings.

We went back to the cottage and gathered around the hearthstone, which I sprinkled with due formality, dedicating it to the Muses. With the white moonbeams streaming through the windows, we sat in the twilight, while a friend improvised weird, imaginative music suited to the occasion. Then we lit the lamps, and Adam read "The Gleam" as a benediction. Cherry rum was handed about and we drank to the health of all present, and again to those who were absent, and then to the hope we should live to participate in many future festivities. The whole ceremony was infused with an exhilaration and gayety that swept away our accustomed Puritanic ideas, and for once in our lives we were simple, joyous pantheists. We half caught the spirit with which the Greeks and Romans celebrated their festivals. What a joy religion must have been, when thus observed, while the world was still young and unburdened with any sense of its sinfulness!

As the too critical reader has doubtless observed, christenings, ceremonies, and obsequies were for a time a mild mania with us. They were begun in

a very harmless and inoffensive way for the sole purpose of giving objects specific names that would enable us to talk intelligibly of them to each other without confusion of speech. To illustrate the pitfalls that attended our conversation before we settled upon this simple means of identifying things, we were sitting one evening on the doorstep, a weary pair, with roving imaginations.

"I have about decided," said I, "to plant a hemlock and a clematis vine by that big stone yonder."

"Where do you mean?" asked the assistant gardener.

"Why, don't you see? my usually steady gaze wanders a trifle to-night, and my relaxed imagination may exaggerate its size, but there is only one big stone over there to the left."

"I see several, and though from your somewhat vague description I cannot single out any one in particular, on general principles the suggestion is good."

As I was then struggling to acquire habits of accuracy, and of definiteness in conversation, I was not satisfied with half comprehensions, but as I was too weary to go and lay my hand on the exact rock, I began intricate calculations to show its precise location relative to certain trees. All this involved needless discussion and consumed unnecessary energy, so the next day, having added my decorative touches, I suggested that we call it Sisy-

phus in honor of the old myth. Sisyphus has simplified matters very much, for it is now the pole star of that region, by which we determine the positions of surrounding objects. Bestowing names soon grew beyond utilitarian purposes, and it came to such a pass that we liked nothing better than to go prowling about the grounds with "The Gleam," or anything else that would lend itself to a rustic orgy. We were unable to hold services in the many temples we erected, or to enjoy fully the spots dedicated, for we thirsted to rear new cairns and beautify new objects. In the course of a season's hard usage "The Gleam" became so attenuated that there were rifts in it, and there was continual danger of its being eclipsed by a less hackneyed luminary. The scribbled records of the occasions which were solemnized by a reading from it became so multiplied that the original text was threatened. We would gladly have presided over our neighbors' boulders, brooks, and arbors, but we were too busy with our own celebrations to render them service. In our efforts to give variety and distinction to the various occasions (for we never repeated ourselves), we developed a bump of ingenuity almost equalling in size our bump of constructiveness.

I think there are many people who desire to realize the idyllic and the imaginative in their lives, yet do not know how incompatible this is with life

lived in brilliantly lighted drawing-rooms and crowded assemblies in the city, which are destructive to the play of fancy and sentiment. I remember how deeply this was impressed on me one wild November night on the Atlantic coast, when the storm beat without, the wind tossed the tops of the immense elms over the house, and the sea roared and surged against the shore fifty yards away. Between the melancholy notes of the foghorn came the dash of rain against the windows ; it was a howling tempest. We had been reading aloud from Browning : —

"Still ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
Which needs the other's office, thou or I?
Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
And can, in truth, my voice untie
Its links, and let it go?
Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that would be righted,
Intrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
. . . . . .
. . . But I know not any tone
So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow;
Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
If they knew any way to borrow
A pathos like thy own?"

When it was finished, we extinguished the lamps, while music was improvised for us. A low fire flickered on the hearth, but its fitful flame was not sufficient to penetrate the corners of the room, which were in deep shadow, nor more than partially to illuminate our faces, which were ghostly and

uncertain in the darkness. The instrument sobbed and wailed as if it were a part of the wind's moaning. Listening, we could scarcely separate the music from the storm, so perfect was the sympathetic interpretation. It seemed as if the wind had come knocking at our very hearts to share with us all the griefs, the wrongs, the crushing sorrows of mankind which it had gathered up in its flight over the earth. It was more tragic than tragedy; it was blackness, despair, and death. I have never witnessed any scene in dramatic art so affecting.

It takes an old country house and dim lights and half silences to develop the poetry in one, and awaken the deepest and strongest sentiments of the heart.

GARDENING

This was ever among the number of my wishes; a portion of ground not over large, in which was a garden . . . and a little woodland besides. The gods have done more abundantly and better for me than this. . . . Here there is no one who reduces my possessions with envious eye, nor poisons them with malice and biting slander; the neighbors smile at me removing clods and stones.

HORACE.

GARDENING

But all our days were not holidays; we often dug and labored like true sons of Adam. As the garden was on the hilltop, above the frost line, we had little to fear from the late spring and early autumn frosts. We were able to plant seeds by the first week of May, although in the intervales it was not safe to plant until June.

With what different motives the succeeding generations of men have come to these lands about us! The first to have his haunt here was the Indian, who was content to trap and fish without becoming entangled in a desire to cultivate the soil. Like a bird of passage, he toiled not, but ate such fruit and game as nature provided. He was followed by a race of men scarcely less abstemious and hardy than himself, who waged a bitter war of conquest; the conquest of virgin forests, wresting foot by foot a plot of ground whereon to build a cabin and cultivate a scanty crop. They were men who did not begin their work at midday and demand the full penny at even; they rose at dawn and worked late, enduring a life of incredible hardship and privation. What courage it took even later to persuade the

apple-tree to blossom in the midst of juniper bushes! Yet the era of orchards was far advanced in comfort and prosperity compared with the original felling of the forests and the first tilling of the soil. We idlers of later times, who exclaim at the rude, neglected condition of New Hampshire farms, fail to see the brawn and muscle involved in every acre of cleared ground, the infinite patience and fatigue that lie locked up in the grim stone walls, every stone and boulder of which had to be dug painfully from the soil. This one feature alone represents the work of whole generations. We who have recently come to these farms which were finally abandoned by their owners, after herculean labors, because they could not be made to yield a meagre livelihood, — we who devote the land to the cultivation of flowers and fruit, and make a plaything of a vegetable garden, know nothing of the heart's blood that fertilizes these stony hills; we know labor but as a beautiful day-dream compared to the real struggle of former days.

Few people now indulge voluntarily in the day-dream even, but employ others to dream for them. Such do not know the swelling pride the gardener takes in his straight, mathematical rows of vegetables as he daily visits them, and watches their growth and blossoming. Such are spared also the pang of finding tender heads of lettuce, cabbage, and cauliflower eaten off overnight by some

unknown monster; for one is convinced it was not in the heart of a beautiful woodchuck, with its gracious eye, to play such wanton havoc. This is a moment when the most peaceable man thirsts for revenge. He becomes keen and cunning; with subtilty he sets traps for the feet of the unwary, and plans the death of the wicked. When his furry enemy lies limp and cold at his feet, it repents him that he did this wickedness. Yet he learns by sad experience that the quality of mercy must be strained in the case of the woodchuck, which is an unregenerate, and nothing save the hand of death can reclaim it from the error of its ways.

One of our aspirations had always been to have an herb garden. It not only pleased our fancy, but we thought it poetic, and that it would impart to our grounds an Old World flavor. Every reading of Shakespeare and the early English poets further incited us. We determined to cultivate one. We, who had been ransacking poetry for some time to secure the various names of herbs, were chagrined to find them quoted at full length in the seed catalogues as if they were the commonest of commodities. It is rather discouraging when you have planned to cultivate what you think unique and poetic, to find the market so glutted with the same article that you can buy all the seed you want for five cents a package. Thus from the start the

enterprise was cheapened in our eyes. By way of experiment we planted fennel, thyme, rue, rosemary, lavender, sage, and sweet basil. At the end of the week, we were delighted to see indications of green, but were disconcerted to find that whatever it was, it grew out of rows as well as in them ; in short, there were no rows at all. There was a sufficient variety of foliage to withhold us from plucking out any of it as weeds. We remembered the admirable law of husbandry set forth in the wheat and the tares, and decided to let all the greenery grow up together and declare its own condemnation before we attempted to do any weeding. The whole trouble lay in the fact that in their tender youth we did not know purslane from rosemary, chickweed from lavender. We could not work out the difficulty algebraically, for we had nothing but unknown quantities to deal with, and as the utmost we could do to simplify the problem was to say, let x represent any and all herbs as well as weeds, it was clearly impossible to eliminate x from the equation. As a result, we stood by, sprinkling water alike on the just and the unjust. Never did weeds thrive so lustily as did these under our assiduous attentions. If they had been allowed to continue at the rate they made their first growth, they would have measured yards in length. When we saw suspicious indications of our old enemy the sorrel, we could hardly stay our hand from judg-

ment. Still, we did not feel safe in plucking it up, forgetting a sound rule to follow in the garden is, that the Creator never made two things exactly alike, so that when you observe a plant that looks exactly like sorrel, you can be perfectly sure that it is no other than sorrel. If the cultivator but knew it, nature has made gardening very simple and easy. However, this bit of information is the sad fruit of observation. The day of wrath came at length when we saw an unmistakable line of green, which ended precipitately at the label marked "fennel." To avenge our long suspense, we made a separation of the sheep from the goats at least six inches on either side of the straggling line of green. In due time others rose and vindicated themselves, and we now feel qualified to speak with authority about the cultivation of herbs. I regret that we have pierced this beautiful bubble, it is one more to be added to the lost illusions of youth, for herbs are not the ideal crop we fancied them. The one we most wanted, lavender, proved so shy that it did not come up at all, and the aromatic odors of the others were positively distressing. With the exception of the sage, they were of no earthly use, as we could not eat, drink, nor wear them, and there was no market for them except in large quantities. So far as I can judge, the only advantage in cultivating them is that, as a rather exceptional possession, it may minister agreeably to one's vanity to be able to say, "I

have an herb garden;" yet in his soul the owner knows it is as vain a boast as if he said, "I keep a white elephant in one of my fields, and spend my mornings caring for it."

Unlike herbs, women have a variety of uses in this world, and the garden furnishes as fine an arena as the drawing-room to exhibit her excellencies. If she has an accurate eye and a conscience, she can be set to dibbling holes for young plants that require transplanting. A conscience is absolutely essential; for as one stands at the end of the row, and views the finished work, any shortcomings, omissions, or irregularities of conduct appear as clearly as they do when one reviews his life at its end. Only by comparing each unit with the whole can we measure the rectitude of a life or a garden row. If a woman is faithful, and knows how to possess her soul in patience, she can be set to weeding. She can hold a line taut, as stakes are driven into the ground; she can scatter seeds and drop potatoes without the least impairment of her smiles; she can restore new vigor to the weary arm of man by sharing never so little in his work; she can banish fatigue with her wit; though not wise in counsel, she may often prevent a man from making egregious blunders, provided in the same breath she takes away the sting of having made an opportune suggestion (which all except archangels resent), by proclaiming the superiority of a man's intelligence

over a woman's. If a man has truly won her heart, she will never shirk ; she will sit as close as possible to the spot where he is working, with rare judgment drawing her feet out of the way at critical moments of digging and hoeing. She lends to the general attractiveness of the scene if she wears white muslin gowns and blue ribbons ; she becomes a ministering angel by bringing a glass of cold milk and a biscuit into the fields at ten o'clock on a hot morning. One thing she cannot do : she cannot know by intuition where the onion row is until it comes up, nor can she divine the exact spot where the peas are planted until they give evidence of themselves. Under these circumstances, her lilting footsteps can do as much damage as if she trod with malicious intent. It is vain to call her attention to the shingles that mark the rows. If she be the kind of a helpmeet of whom I am talking, when she sees her lord in the field, in her impulsive desire to reach his side, she forgets vegetables, shingles (she probably would disregard hot ploughshares, if they had been left out overnight), and without exactly vaulting through space, she clears an incredible distance in three seconds. Her errors are of the feet, not of the heart. While she is gracefully posed on a boulder (having given due consideration to a picturesque disposition of her skirts), and telling a rattling story for his edification, with those same voluminous skirts she may be the undoing of his choicest

celery plants. But he would not have her cut her story short nor remove herself from the landscape for the entire celery in the township. Taking her all in all, woman is a helper in a garden of Eden, and it has been proved satisfactorily, to one man at least, that he can work more hours with less fatigue if he have an entertainer than he can without one.

Gardening is like everything else in life: if one is not compelled to do it, it is great fun; and it continues to be fun until some day the corn or the potatoes need hoeing sadly when the hoer has other plans for his amusement. Then he suddenly awakens to the fact that he is being driven by necessity, instead of playing with inclination, and in consequence the whole scene is darkened. This is the hour for the true helpmeet to flaunt her shining virtues. She should shoulder the hoe, and declare that her happiness that morning depends upon satisfying a yearning desire to hoe potatoes, and "to dig just a little about the corn, you know." Before he knows it, he, the rebellious one, is trundling along at her heels as eager for the fray as she pretends to be. But the wise man will keep the siren at work, for having lured him to the fields, she is apt to play him false, and perch herself in her airy, decorative fashion well out of his way, while he perspires under the July sun and slaves like a Caliban for her.

What a delightful schoolroom is a garden on a sunny, cool hilltop, if the schoolmaster be your

chosen playmate. Day by day you turn together a fresh page of nature, you learn the best varieties of seeds, the time required for their germination, the soil and conditions best suited to their needs, the habits of plants, the stratagems of their enemies, the time of flowering, and the proper time for gathering the fruit. You may be initiated in the gentle game of bouldering, which for exercise, interest, and profit excels every other sport. The qualifications of a good boulderer are judgment, quickness of eye, and great agility of body. The way the game first begins is this. One says to another, "My dear, will you come out just a moment? I want you to keep your hand on a bar; I have a boulder in the garden that I cannot manage alone."

The uninitiated partner thinks on the way out, "This is a queer thing to ask a woman to do; this is a man's work," which idea shows that she knows nothing about the game. She acquiesces, and acting under directions, with very little expenditure of power on her lever, she takes advantage of every slight gain he makes with his pry, and in less than half a minute they have laid bare to the sunshine that which is older, and has lain longer buried, than the oldest mummy in Egypt. It does not look its age, and curiosity is soon exhausted concerning it. This first triumph having been so easily won, the newly admitted member of the Society for Excavation becomes eager for another bout. A wily

master will play upon the vanity of the neophyte, and will render unstinted praise of her skill and dexterity. By a proper stirring of her ambition she will ever be ready to lend a hand in an emergency. I know one such teacher, who by dint of encouragement secured the services of an ambitious pupil to exhume fifty boulders, some of them weighing a ton. Before a great while the enthusiasm of the pupil exceeded that of the master, and she used to coax him to start the day's amusements by getting out three or four. Those who enjoy chess can appreciate bouldering. You dig about one, and loosen the ground, and get a little purchase, just as you run out your pawns to open the game. Then the other comes in, and inch by inch takes advantage of every gain. By and by it is raised enough to run a plank under one side, a strategy equal to taking your opponent's favorite piece. Then you place a small stone on the plank, and thereby get fresh purchase; now you are endangering the queen. Little by little, with but a trifling exercise of strength, if your levers are from eight to twelve feet long, you circumvent it here and there, raising one corner out of the ground, then another, blocking it up each time. "Checkmate," you cry; the huge inert mass that bade defiance all along is so delicately poised as to take but a pound of pressure to topple it over on its side quite beyond the hole. It is more exciting, when well played, than any

pastime I know, and possesses infinite variety; for from the small nose projecting above ground, you can tell nothing about the size and shape of what lies buried. Sometimes it looks insignificant, and proves unmanageably large, requiring cattle to remove it; and often it is just the reverse. The formation also differs; some, owing to their peculiar composition, are four times as heavy as others of the same size. It is all a matter of chance, and each requires a different handling. It is an unsurpassed way to develop muscle, and as an entertainment, bouldering runs the exercise of clearing the woods a very close second. After a goodly number of them were ranged about the fields, two men with a yoke of cattle and a drag made short work of removing them, and before night they were built into a stone wall at the edge of the woods.

I used to take great pleasure in watching a flock of crows in their daily flight. Like squirrels in the forest, nimbly leaping from one tree to another, thus proving a familiarity with the highways among the branches and twigs, the short cuts and cross-roads, the crows followed their beaten paths through the air. At about the same hour each day they can be found in the same places. In the early morning they start from the wood behind the garden; later they breakfast on the slope at the west end of the house, a noisy, chattering, greedy lot. Then they fly to the treetops of the orchard; later

to the edge of the woods on a grassy knoll in front of the house, thence to the terrace, and then they disappear for the day, I know not in what direction. Invariably they make this same circuit, and their presence is indicated, even if you do not see the others, by the sentinel that occupies certain coigns of vantage overlooking their feeding-places. Up against the sky on the tip end of a pine or a tamarack he perches on a twig so slender that it bends under his weight. Not until the others fly away does he descend from his watch-tower; and whether they take turns on sentry duty, or one alone performs that office, I do not know; nor do I wish to know, for the actual facts could not possibly interest me as much as do my speculations regarding the matter.

All the birds about here have their own haunts and daily circuits. The whip-poor-will is first heard where the crows begin their cawing. He edges up in the wood that bounds the garden, then flies under the greening apple-tree behind the house. From this he makes a long sweep across the meadow to a grove of white birches a quarter of a mile distant, then back to the terrace, next to a grapevine covering a wall, and lastly he alights on or near the front doorstep, where we can distinctly hear a metallic cluck between the longer notes. At this last place the serenader sits and sings until it seems impossible that he has any note or strength left; but he

continues undiminished in volume, singing on and on, until the listener fairly gasps and chokes for breath in his sympathy for the spent bird. However, sympathy is entirely wasted, for he mounts on a light wing and is off, and a moment later is piping his linkéd lay again, but too remotely to follow his track. For three summers the whip-poor-wills have pursued this same course through the summer nights.

An interesting question presented itself to my mind one summer on seeing two portions of a garden which had been planted by two different men. Each portion ironically repeated the character of its planter not only in the rows, but in the manner of growth. One presented an inconsequent, slovenly, and plebeian stratum of society in the vegetable world, the other was trim, correct, and incorruptible by the evil example of its own kind. Is plant life imitative of its cultivator, just as a dog reflects the character of the master, or is a man so hedged about by his own individuality that he stamps it indelibly upon all that he touches?

From a sentimental point of view gardening is a failure. With dread the gardener awaits the day when the labor of his hands shall bring its due reward. He suffers inconsolable loss when called upon to contribute his onions, beets, lettuces, and celery. Each plant removed leaves a painful gap. It is useless to try to coax or bribe him to dig up

the single mature plant if it happens to be in the middle of a row, and all the others are too small to gather. This violates his ideas of symmetry, and symmetry and poetry prevail on the farm even if we forego the fresh delicacy. We have a neighbor who takes such pride in his irreproachable rows that for weeks after his vegetables are fit for use, the family continues to buy of neighbors. We do not carry sentiment to this extreme, but we begin to pluck at the end where plants have a perverse way of tapering off into nothingness, and work inward on the row; yet I see even this gives a pang, and the vacancies are immediately filled with young seedlings. Those who indulge in sentiment should have two gardens, one for show and one for use.

By planting at various times, we have tender green peas from June until October, and lettuce as late as November. By placing a half barrel about rhubarb it can be kept succulent throughout the summer. Various are the devices we have resorted to in order that we may believe eternal spring prevails, nor do we lose faith in summer until the winter snows lay about the door.

After supplying the household throughout the summer with fresh vegetables, enough remained to furnish stores for winter. Many were the baskets taken up after the multitude was fed. Tomatoes, peas, corn, and pickles, to say nothing of fruits and jellies, were sealed in glass jars; dried peas and

beans, beets, potatoes, squashes, celery, cabbages, oyster plant, onions, cauliflower, and brussels sprouts were gleaned from what appeared to be a stripped garden, so that we were supplied with a perennial feast at the mere cost of the effort to raise and gather it.

AN INTERPRETATION

Look upon men and things with the inner eye, never forgetting that the shadow they throw as they pass by upon hillock or wall is but the fleeting image of a mightier shadow.

MAETERLINCK.

AN INTERPRETATION

NATURE symbolizes human nature in her other creations. The best way to understand society is to leave it behind and go alone into forest and field and study plants and trees. If you have a puzzling question concerning men's relation to each other, or a problem of existence, the garden can interpret it. It clarifies the vision, and helps the mind to see things in their true proportion. If a man chafes under the oppressions a portion of his race deals out to others, he learns in his garden that it is a law of nature for the strong to prey on the weak, that every plant has its pest and every tree its foe. So long as cruelty, tyranny, and oppression obtain in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, it reconciles a man to its presence in society. It is not against the universal ills that a man cries out, but it is against the special ones that make him feel fortune has discriminated against him. If he is groaning under the burdens and cares of life, let him take what comfort he can in seeing each individual plant daily struggle against the odds of too much or too little sunshine or rain; bravely enduring the assaults of slugs and bugs; barely recovering at times from

the onslaughts of woodchucks, crows, and rabbits. His observations ought to console him in regard to his own vicissitudes; he will come to have a fellow feeling for the sufferer, and will do what he can to make its brief existence as comfortable as possible. When he assumes the rôle of kindly providence in rearing his nurslings, he will learn how difficult it is to mete out a perfect justice, how impossible to recognize the conflicting interests of all. Plants raise an outcry against weeds, against cutworms and slugs. Worms and weeds, in turn, clamor for life and sustenance. In the smallest garden plot is played the grim tragedy of struggle for existence and its sequel, — survival of the fittest.

We had two delightful companions in our gardening, a pair of fawn-colored kittens named Nip and Tuck. Wherever they heard our voices, they came bounding in that direction and played about as long as we remained. Their spirit of adventure proved a continual source of dismay to us. They loved to tempt providence by creeping down in the hole when we were at work getting out a boulder. If the rock had chanced to slip one inch, it would have crushed them to death. They followed us through the fields and woods like hounds. Social science was at one time my favorite study, but more than all books on sociology did these kittens help me to understand and accept the inequalities of society. Nip was bright, intelligent, and quick as a flash.

When less than four months old, he caught red squirrels and laid them at our feet waiting for praise. It was impossible to deny the kitten anything; his determination and ingenuity always won in the end; we declared Nip the most impertinent, persistent, wilful animal that ever existed; that he ought to be curbed and suppressed; yet we weakly yielded to him from sheer force of necessity.

After some ignominious defeat, I would protest. "Who runs this house, we or the cat? My dear, you must snub him."

"I have tried to," returned Adam in despair, "but it is no use. It always ends the same way, — Nip snubs me."

In earliest kittenhood Nip learned the trick of springing up on Adam's shoulder, where he would sit through a meal, never attempting to get on the table; but would put out a tiny, protesting paw at almost every bite taken. He had the most delightful, perverse, original ways imaginable. The other was a brother of the same age, a timid, easily abashed cat, — a look would disconcert Tuck for a whole morning, — a patient, dumb beast, absolutely lacking in spirit, with that amiability which some women possess, of whom all say, "What a sweet woman!" A cat too good for this wicked world, and with no special qualifications for the next.

"What better illustration can you ask," I inquired, "of the different conditions of men than

these two kittens furnish? Heredity and environment count for nothing. Nip is a type of the man who is determined to succeed by fair means or foul, who bends all to his purposes, whom others are forced to serve willingly or unwillingly, who takes no denial, who feels no rebuff; who gobbles all the tidbits of fortune, and ends in being president of a great trust, a director of four banks and six railroads."

"So you are a monopolist and an autocrat, pussy?" said Adam, stroking Nip, who was rubbing about his legs. "And what are you, Tuck? Are you one of the meek who are to inherit the earth?"

"Yes," replied I, "Tuck represents the oppressed man, the man who declares the hand of society is against him; who has equal chances without the wit to avail himself of them; a gentle, peaceable creature, easily discouraged, never successful; always cheated out of the plums of life, though pitiably grateful for its crumbs. What is the use of proclaiming that a new order of things shall make all men equal, when the same apparent injustice which discriminates against the individual man pervades the lower orders? How can we hope for equality of men so long as we have inequality of cats and dogs and horses and forest trees and plant life?"

"I believe we did find trees had been unequally endowed by nature, when we tried to make a choice for the last group we set out," responded he.

"Look where you will," continued I, "you discover the fortunes of created things never are, nor can be equal; some are favored and some are not. Comfort, opportunity, success, are gifts bestowed upon certain ones and withheld from others. Yet one man is not a laborer and a server, while another is the facile eater of all good things, because of the injustice of society to the first, any more than because of its favor to the second."

"No," answered Adam, "I never believed that society shows favoritism; it merely accords a man the place he wins for himself; it accepts him at his own estimate."

"To put it somewhat differently, I hold that society has nothing to do with it except to make room for the man where his destiny has called him. Men slave or rule because they cannot help themselves; they must needs follow the leadings of their own natures, and what we call inequality in the conditions of men is but a small portion of the general scheme of discrimination pervading all nature."

We were in the garden, and Adam was transplanting a row of young cabbages. "Right there in your hand is another example of what we were speaking," said I. "By what right did you choose that last young plant you set out with such care, which you will nurture and allow to fulfil the law of its being, while the one you picked up just before,

you threw away as superfluous, — see, it is already wilting."

"You can see for yourself, that was a sickly plant and would never come to anything," explained he, picking up the wee morsel.

"But why is it sickly? Why is n't it as strong as the others?" pursued I.

"Just because it is n't. Seeds do not come up alike; you can't explain first principles."

"No," replied I, "but we can recognize them as such, and here probably lies the answer to the whole question. They were different as seeds before they became plants, and because of this fact they have a different fate. We accept the situation without dispute in the plant world; why not make an application of the same to men?"

"What good will it do?" inquired he.

I believe the laws governing that cabbage are fundamentally the same as those controlling the higher orders of creation, and an application of them might help the individual to a better understanding of himself and his fate. Let us follow this line of reasoning. One man's lot is different from another's because he was different from the other before he was born. Each is born into the world with certain predetermined tendencies, characteristics, and aptitudes. Where these are strong enough, they overleap the supposed boundaries of environment or heredity, as in a genius who rises

above a lowly surrounding and outstrips any possible endowment of heredity from his ancestors. A puzzled world looks on and asks, Where did he get his genius? I believe his soul was already great before it sought a human birth, and it brought gifts already acquired to a human body. On the contrary, a man with brutal instincts often has everything that contributes to a fine type of manhood in the way of gentle rearing, wealth, travel, opportunity of every kind, yet may be unworthy of it all and remain a beast to the hour of his death. Such a soul was scarcely awakened to spiritual possibilities when it sought a human existence, and could draw from life only material gratifications in base forms."

"That would be comforting doctrine," interrupted my companion, "to fathers and mothers who are holding themselves responsible for their own faults which they so often see exaggerated in their children. You quite dispose of heredity, then? In that your reasoning is unscientific."

"Not necessarily," I explained. "I merely reverse the usual statement that parents transmit their qualities and traits to their children, and hold that the soul unborn chooses not only a parentage that represents certain of its own characteristics, but also a condition of life qualified to develop its preconceived traits in an earthly environment. Circumstances at various portions of parents' life are

so different as to emphasize or repress their natural characteristics. Thus parents may give birth to several types of souls that have sought the one parentage, though each soul may have been drawn by an affinity different from the others. This would account for wide differences between children in the same family. Even as we see three similar seeds spring from the same soil, one yielding the tomato, one the potato, and the third producing the near relative of them both, the deadly Jamestown weed, so under the same environment we continually see one make a good and another a bad use of material things. Each makes his own assimilation, and draws and is drawn to his own affinities as imperatively as elements under chemical laws. A man will find in the world at large what he brings to it. If he is timid and faint-hearted and self-depreciating, he will find failure; if he expects to be cheated and maligned, he will easily find rogues and liars; if he steadfastly believes that good predominates in the world, that men are trying to do their best, he will live in an atmosphere of his own creation, and men will yield courtesy, honesty, and generosity in return for what he sends forth. Like draws like. When man has learned that what he has or has not in life, what he suffers, what he enjoys, is due to what he is within, then he will begin to study what it is in himself that thwarts his best development, his daily welfare."

"But, as a matter of fact, all the world knows the good do not grow rich and powerful," said he, "and the bad, miserable. The extortioner cuts more coupons than the just man, the swindler usually drives a better pair than his honest victim."

"The extent and variety of a man's possessions are no measure of his actual welfare, for I am speaking of the greater gifts, of the truer possessions, — peace, joy, opportunity to be of service, intellectual and spiritual growth and soul advancement. If men recognized that distinctions were primary and lay in themselves, they would not dare to be unjust, selfish, and tyrannical in their relations with each other, for they would see that so far from gaining any advantage over others by the exercise of these evil tendencies, they were retarding their own progress. The aim of life and the gauge of a man's ability would no longer be material gains; his degree of spiritual development would be his only worth, and alone would give prestige and power."

"I confess I do not see any solution to the problem," returned Adam. "Men are not prepared to live up to this Utopian scheme of self-redemption. The hard fact still remains that the world is just as bad and selfish and unequally divided as it always was, and it seems to me you only complicate matters and make the question all the more hopeless of solution if, while trying to rescue man from the inequalities of existence, you drag in his train

every tree or animal that struggles with adversity. I thought you were an optimist, but this wears the blackest dye of pessimism. Everything is a failure, then, under its present condition, — is that your conclusion?"

"By no means," I replied. "We need not blink the existence of what we see every minute because it is painful to look at. Though inequality is evidently the universal scheme, we need not accept the situation grimly because it is natural law. Why not search for the truth involved in all these multitudinous examples? Take any illustration you please: a horse goaded daily by a cruel driver; a tree or plant, such as your rejected cabbage, that was handicapped from the first by springing from an imperfect seed; or the vicious who become outcasts, the feeble-minded who are public charges. If my theory does not reach out and include every one of these, it is a failure."

"You have indeed set yourself a task, if you are to succor all these," exclaimed Adam, smiling. "Go on, and let me see what you will make of it."

"I cannot hope to convince you immediately, but I 'll drop my seed of comfort in your mind, and let you do your own growing into my theory," replied I. "Remember, I do not offer this as final truth, but I do claim that it interprets the seeming warfare of good and evil, that it gives me increasing peace of mind and happiness, and helps me to see a world not suffering, but *growing*."

"Explain yourself."

"Let us go back to the simpler forms of creation, where the laws are more obvious. I have spent a good deal of time sitting before trees and flowers, thinking of the life principle embodied in them, and often it has seemed to me the mysterious gates of their being were thrown back, and I perceived the feeble divine spark animating each. I realized that I stood in the presence of a dawning intelligence. I believe everything that has been kindled for one instant with the spark of life continues as a part of the divine and eternal. I reverently feel this in every growing plant form in nature. I feel it yet more as I look into the eyes of animals, and in the meanest criminal it is greater than in the highest brute. Now just here lies a point that causes endless confusion and misapprehension. What was necessary for the preservation of the species in the lower animals assumes a different character in a human being, who, though he may be still an animal to all intents and purposes, and amenable to animal laws, is judged indiscriminately by a code of ethics formulated by our finest minds, and to which only the highest type of man can conform. That supreme regard for imperative appetites which we permit unchallenged in animals is adjudged greed, selfishness, tyranny, lust, and murder in man. Why call it the working of natural law in the animal, and in man — evil? Looked at truly, there is no such

thing as evil; what was necessary for the preservation of the species in lower animals has merely become a clog and hindrance to a more advanced spirit which has no need of such aids; but it is a long way from brute force to unselfish devotion to others, from full sway of animal passion to self-imposed chastity, from greedy gorging to abstemious living, and the chasm between these is not immediately bridged. Why not face the matter frankly and acknowledge that some men are but a step removed from the beast, and when such an one has his drunken orgies or commits crimes he is still acting the part of an animal? The lower nature still controls, even though his spirit has assumed the higher form of the human body, and the spirit has not acquired the supremacy over the body that it will have later."

"It would be impracticable," interposed Adam, "to make distinctions in law between man and man. The very basis of our Constitution is that all men are born free and equal, and are entitled to be judged alike. However, I quite agree with you, for though it may be necessary for the protection of society to insist that all its members conform to the highest standard, yet in so doing we lay impossible demands upon the depraved and ignorant; in short, that the law and its terrors are made by those strong in virtues against the weak offenders."

"It may not be practicable," returned I, "to administer punishment otherwise than it is now done; at the same time there is a law of humanity that is deeper than its outward codes, which in the course of time modifies and reconstructs men's ideas of the dispensation of justice, as it has done in the acquittal of those who commit murder under insane impulses. But to return to this question of the spirit. Granting that the element which we call divine is involved in the life principle wherever we see it, I claim that each spark is capable of growing and expanding ultimately into the highest fulness of spiritual development that we can conceive of; otherwise some would still be discriminated against, and there would still exist injustice and inequality. As a matter of fact, you see the lower created things accepting their fate with the utmost complacence; the most stunted, ill-favored plant, as well as the most vigorous, does the best it can. It seeks the light and tries to reproduce itself; as far as its ability goes, it perfectly fulfils the law. It accepts its place in life, and in the attempt to accomplish the purpose of existence, aspires toward perfection. I cannot believe that a single brief round is all that is to be accorded to the abortive plant, the wretched horse, the starved cat, the hunted criminal; that having been born into a life of limitation and suffering, while others of their kind know only comfort and plenty, at its miserable end any one of them is to be annihilated forever."

"Your belief is based on pure assumption," said he. "You can never prove what becomes of any creature at its death. Assumption is as flimsy a foundation for future existence as it is for argument."

I ignored his interruption. Intent on reaching my conclusion, I refused to examine the cornerstones of my logic. "Let us suppose each of these poor creatures has gone the way of all the earth — and died. What if the outward form of that cabbage plant dies? What is it that dies? surely not the vital spirit animating it, but only the temporary abode in which it dwelt. What becomes of it then? No one can say with positive assurance, but I believe just as far as it grew in the measure of aspiration will it continue to live in some other form, beginning on a plane that touched the high-water mark of its last existence. To my mind, this accounts for Nature's apparent indifference to the universal death and wanton destruction of life in the world. Death is a token of growth — the means by which spirit escapes and makes its ascent from one form to another. Knowing that when a thing dies, death does not involve annihilation of the spirit within, but merely facilitates its progress, Nature calmly sees one prey upon another, assured that the time will come, — and it is only a question of time, — when it will have less maw and more spirit."

"You think, then, she is reconciled to the results

of famines, pestilences, floods, droughts, disasters of all kinds that carry off myriads of men and creatures, because these so-called calamities serve the double purpose of preserving balance in creation, as well as furthering her scheme of universal evolution?"

"I do indeed. Some speak of evolution as if it were a thing already accomplished in past ages, a scheme affecting the type rather than the individual. To me, evolution is a present operation, involving everything we see, but it is not evolution of type, but the evolution of spirit through types. Under Nature's plan each tiny groping thread of intelligence, once awakened, continues to feel its way upward through countless existences toward the light of the highest development. With this in mind, as I go through the forest, I see in the vegetable world all about me my sisters and brothers, in that we are alike kindled with a flame from the same unquenchable source. They happen to be still in the lower grades, while I have passed on into a higher. These differences are puzzling, for I cannot understand, when the world is so old, why there should still be cats and dogs, shrubs and rocks. I speculate much on what has retarded their progress. Sometimes I feel an infinite pity that they have not yet come into a consciousness of their spiritual heritage. I lay my hand on a misshapen dwarf of a pine and say, 'Cheer up, be brave and patient. The eternity

before you is long enough for you to become all and more than you can wish to be. Only be faithful.'"

"But," interposed Adam, "it seems to me you have drifted from the subject. You began with injustice and end with pantheism."

"As a matter of fact, a certain form of pantheism is just the step we must take before I propose the climax of my scheme of redemption. So far, you have allowed me to take for granted that the life principle is eternal, and that in development it is capable of passing through many stages to the highest. Now, then, pervading and connected with each created form in some mysterious way is a guiding intelligence that directs the steps of its progress. This intelligence knows that certain conditions peculiarly suited to the individual are required to develop the individual life, and these conditions are to be found in just the form that we see these various sparks manifested, in tree, bird, or man, in saint or sinner, and the environment of each furnishes the one touch most needed, at that particular period of its eternal existence, to develop it best. Individual progress toward the spiritual doubtless is infinitely small each time, especially when it first escapes from the purely material. The ascent from the material to the spiritual is not merely through form, but also through suffering, failure, and loss, in continual effort to escape the

weary round of misery attending existence of any degree, and all these ultimately lead to experience, and later to wisdom and freedom. Why sweet fruit should spring from so bitter a seed is inexplicable, nor are we able to trace the law of spiritual growth, save as we make in the broadest way a study of creation through the ages. I do not pretend to say what successive forms the germ of spirit takes, nor at what critical moment it sloughs off the bonds of the material to the extent that it is awakened to spiritual possibilities. I do not say when a perfect plant dies that it takes the next higher form according to our human classifications and becomes a shrub and later on a tree."

"Nor that a bird becomes a reptile, and the chimpanzee a man. I was wondering how far you would follow modern classifications. You have such an artless way of keeping your feet clear of all entanglements that I am prepared to hear that you have skipped scientific knots in unravelling the skein of existence. I presume you repudiate science in the whole matter. It is far easier when two irreconcilable foes are pitted against each other to trip up the one you least like, carry him off bodily, and leave the pet hero in possession of the field," said he jestingly.

"Yes," continued I, "that is what I have done, for I think nature's classifications might reverse ours. But this is a matter of pure speculation, and

does not affect my theory. I simply hold that when once called into life, the germ expands eternally, and the spirit in it develops itself, ever taking a higher expression ; and that this spirit voluntarily chooses the temporary abode best adapted to its immediate purposes. To bring it home personally, your spirit chose your present body and mine chose mine, knowing perfectly the life that would thereby be entailed with it. What matter, then, what you or I may suffer, even though we faint under our load, or our bodies perish from cold and hunger? If we recognize that our spirits have voluntarily assumed this life, with a foreknowledge of the concomitant conditions, in order to profit by the disciplines afforded by its peculiar trials, we can no longer regard ourselves the helpless victims of cruel circumstances."

"One thing favors your argument," suggested he ; "it is that each man accepts the conditions of his life as if they were his own peculiar possession. Whatever may be his griefs or miseries, I have yet to meet any one who would exchange places with another. Though rarely happy or contented, each tacitly regards his lot with a certain underlying satisfaction, no matter how volubly he may complain that he is 'the victim of an all-wise but unscrupulous Providence,' as it was once expressed by a man who had just buried his sixth wife."

"It goes even further than that," said I ; "men

unconsciously recognize that what they are and have is indisputably their own and the one thing needful for them. As men mature, they love to recall how they have been led out of and delivered from difficulties; more or less clearly they discern the intimate touch of a wiser hand than their own in matters pertaining to their destiny. Failing to perceive it as a constant indwelling presence, many see it only when they need deliverance. At all times the majority of men make this power extraneous to themselves, and relegate it to a hazy place called heaven, or beyond the confines of space. The exact spot from which it operates has never been unanimously agreed upon."

"They agree quite as little on the character and attributes of the Divine Spirit as upon its place of abode. Each of us in reality does what Fichte announced to his class in philosophy one day: 'To-morrow we shall construct God.' There is a witty parody on Genesis, 'And men said, Let us make God in our own image.'"

"Men do construct their own idea of Deity on no larger lines than their individual minds can compass. His height and breadth depend upon the observer's angle of vision. It is like the law of perspective, in that the farther we remove God from daily life the smaller our conception of Him grows. If men could but recognize that this directing power lay within and was an integral part of

themselves, it would alter their conceptions of life and duty, and add a new dignity to them. Without stripping Deity of a power which they now acknowledge is used only intermittently for their benefit, they would take the greatest comfort in the belief that an all-wise God had lodged imperishably in each intelligence a part of his divinity, and had endowed with a measure of his own attributes what men call vaguely the soul. Then the soul would assume its rightful proportions and sustain a more vital relation to the man, who would perceive that, although he was hedged about by his own individuality and methods of spiritual evolution, which are distinct from any other, he has at his command an infallible guide and a powerful aid in extremity. Let him once believe with all his mind that he is instructed and protected by the great eternal spirit which abides within him, and let the relation of body and spirit become intimate and inseparable, and he would reverence himself as something holy, and it would take away every thought of injustice and inequality. His aim would be no longer to wrest this world's goods from his neighbor, but to make himself a more worthy recipient of the good that ultimately will be his. I would that all men understood that advancement lays in their own keeping; they would try to hasten its coming, for they would see that whether they receive it to-morrow, or a thousand years hence, depends on their spiritual

qualifications. As I have said before, I do not mean worldly possessions, when I speak of the good awaiting men; for in my theology, money, power, position, or the lack of them, play no more important part than sorrow, suffering, loss, success in life, or any other discipline. Intrinsically, there is nothing good or bad attached to any of them, save as it is applied. Growth is the sole thing, all else is contributive and relative. What a comfort it is to think that men, who at present are sunk in debauchery and crime, will in the course of time feel a satiety as bitter as gall; that their revolt will deepen into repentance, and repentance into reform. Even through the foulest soil a feeble germ can push its way to the light, and we know not how many purifications such a soul may go through before it lifts itself into a clearer and higher atmosphere; but that time will surely come; and suffering, misery of mind and body, will have been his salvation. Do you not see also that a life of limitation, of deprivation and hardship, can be rich in a hungering after freedom and scope? When a man cries from the depth of his being for mastery over adverse circumstances, he learns his needs; and the satisfaction of first the temporal and later on of spiritual cravings becomes imperative, and thus the soul liberates the man through growth of aspiration. Men stagnate when they enjoy uninterruptedly a full gratification of material needs. Each soul must work its own way to the light."

"Is the little sermon ended?" asked Adam, smiling indulgently at my earnestness. "My cabbages are transplanted, but instead of my feeling responsible for their future growth, I shall take my ease, knowing I have been but an incident in their life. Though it may look as if I were meddling with their free development, I doubt if it would do any harm if I visited them with my hoe occasionally," and he gathered up his garden implements with a quizzical look in his eyes.

It matters little to me whether many or few accept such a philosophy of life. It is enough that kittens and cabbages, the dumb yet eloquent interpreters of nature, proclaim my favorite views. When my own faith runs low for want of sympathy, I take out Plato and read this sentence: "To affirm positively, indeed, that these things are exactly as I have described them, does not become a man of sense; that, however, this, or something of the kind, takes place with respect to our souls and their habitations — since our soul is certainly immortal — this appears to me most fitting to be believed, and worthy the hazard for one who trusts in its reality; for the hazard is noble, and it is right to allure ourselves with such things, as with enchantments; for which reason I have prolonged my story to such a length."

TERRA INCOGNITA

Nature has no rood of meadow so empty but to the purged eye she can crowd it with enchantments.

EMERSON.

TERRA INCOGNITA

THE fifth article of the Playmates' Creed runs thus: It is a fatal mistake for the idealist to become familiar with his boundaries; his imagination then ceases to exaggerate their wonders.

It is in obedience to this canon that a large portion of our hundred acres remains as yet unexplored by us. I myself have never been over more than half of the boundary line, and many parts of the farm I have visited but once. There is one tract in particular which has a peculiar fascination. Lying remote from the house, it was only by chance I discovered it one day, when I had strayed down a sunny hillslope in search of strawberries, and thus came to the edge of a wonderful forest. Nature had made the entrance as alluring as possible with a thick, mossy carpet that still sparkled with dew where the shadows of the trees fell. Within were cool, dim vistas, in pleasant contrast to the hot, stony hill I had just left. It was a scene to fill the heart with delight. In the distance could be heard the note of the hermit thrush; I stood irresolute, tempted to penetrate its mysteries, yet withheld by Reason. Thus did she argue: Why dispel the

vision? Other woods have looked enticing, and have proved thorny with brambles, rough and difficult underfoot, commonplace to the eye. Keep this as a sanctuary for the imagination; cherish it as a place where your fancy may dwell; visit it only in thought, and you will ever be able to preserve the ideal woodland with the dew and glamour of a June morning upon it.

Thus was Eve tempted, but fell not, for Reason won the day. To this hour this wood remains a beautiful mystery, though again and again I have stood at the gate of Paradise, each time wrestling with a desire to enter. We have endeavored to carry out this self-restraint in various ways. If we have visited a scene under circumstances that made the excursion idyllic, we preserve the vivid impressions by never returning to it. Nothing dulls the edge of enjoyment and so quickly reduces the dreams of existence to a commonplace as repetition.

Yet there is a disadvantage in leaving too much to the imagination, as I found one day when lost on our own premises and wandering about in a driving rainstorm that suddenly descended. In vain I recalled the words of the philosopher who says: "If a person would conclude that after all he is not lost, he is not beside himself, but standing in his own old shoes on the very spot he is; but the places that have known him, they are lost, how much anxiety and danger would vanish." I had appreciated the

calm wisdom of the advice when I read it by the fireside, but when it came to a practical application, it did not much matter whether it was I, or the places representing food and shelter which had known me, that were lost, so long as there was fixed apparently a great gulf between me and them. Nearly two hours I searched for the footpath leading to the cottage. I saw then, if I wished to keep up the charm of unfamiliarity, it would be wise to carry a diagram of the grounds in an outer coat pocket.

Shortly after this event, we were sitting by our fireside one evening, early in September, when we heard a timid knock at the door. The young daughter of a neighboring family came in quite breathless and asked if she might stay with us until her brother returned. Her family had taken tea on the hilltop where I had been lost, and in searching for that same path to return home, the maidservant, who had accompanied them, had separated from the others, and though they began immediately to call her, she had not rejoined them. The brother had gone on with the mother to see if the girl had found her way home, and if not, to arouse the neighborhood. I felt much concern for the strayed reveller, and knew how terrified she must be in strange grounds with twilight coming on. In a moment we were ready with a lantern, and leaving word where the brother should join us,

we entered the sacred grove, which at nightfall no longer inspires reverence but fear.

We hallooed, and called, and whistled, which Echo relentlessly mocked; then all was silent. The trees looked threatening and ominous, and shadows were fast deepening, as we passed through the ravine and up the stony slope. From this high outlook we could see the densely wooded surrounding country, and the voice which had been swallowed up by the forest was here able to carry a great distance. It requires but a trifle to transform an ordinary circumstance into something deeply impressive. In this instance darkness worked the enchantment, and made the hour seem a dream recovered from the mythology of the old world. Against a sky of luminous amber, the mountain peaks stood out in severe, black outline; about us was the gray twilight, in which darkness was the crescent element. Objects had lost their color; the trees, the rocks, the juniper bushes, our figures, were uncanny and sepulchral. On the highest point Adam stood, making a speaking-trumpet of his hand, and shouted in slow, solemn measure, Mar-ga-ret! Mar-ga-ret! It was thrilling to hear the deep resonant tones echo and reëcho, as if they were wingéd messengers calling aloud her name as they flew hither and thither. I fancied the dead in their graves must hear, and half expected them to rise up about us to join the search. It was Orpheus

again calling to the lost Eurydice, and his voice had the old note of melancholy and despair. I do not know where Adam got his voice that night, with its unwonted pathos and tragic power, but it was the climax of the occasion.

The pitilessness of Nature is never more clearly seen than when she refuses to interpose in behalf of the individual. What was it to her that a distracted lost creature should have the horror of night added to the peril of swamps and bogs? When the sun shines and the heart is brave, Nature lets man delight in the similitudes between himself and her various expressions; she allows him to imagine he is one with her, and that she has a concern and tender feeling for his welfare; that she goes out of her way to do him a kindly office; that the relation of "You and I" exists between them. But let him implore her aid in extremity, she freezes and burns him as she would the meanest worm crawling in her dust. Let him pray for one more hour of daylight, the curtain of night falls to the exact minute, though a million like him should perish in consequence. The pretty, fallacious "You and I" gives place to the stern, inexorable "I, Nature, stand alone, and care naught for the petty affairs and griefs of men."

The young girl by my side whispered, "Is n't it exciting? If it were not for poor Margaret, I think I should quite enjoy it."

I did not say so, but in spite of poor Margaret, I was enjoying the sentiment and poetry of the scene in a wildly tumultuous way. Provided she had the good taste to come out of the adventure alive and unhurt (I felt to do otherwise would be an inexcusable violation of proprieties), I should forever recognize my debt of gratitude to Margaret, for letting the places that had known her get lost so close to our immediate vicinity, thereby furnishing us with a rare experience. There is always danger of the seeker after the picturesque becoming hard of heart as he battens on the vicissitudes and emotions of life. As he becomes a more critical connoisseur of its tragedy and comedy, he is apt to grow exacting in his requirements.

We lingered so long in hope of hearing a response that we too lost our way when we descended from the hill. Never did I realize how pitiably insignificant and grotesque man's methods and efforts are, until we tried to substitute our ineffectual lantern for the light of heaven. A glowworm could have illuminated the landscape better than it did. Aside from being ineffectual, the lantern proved more of a snare than a help, blinding our eyes, without lighting the way. We fell headlong over stones and stumps, and with each fresh disaster our pity for the wanderer increased. We reached the house at length, from whence we heard the woods resound with horns and calls. We learned the

dénouement of the adventure before we retired that night. The girl had not sat down supinely to wait for the familiar places that had known her to seek her out, but had set out in the wrong direction to find them, with such steadfastness of purpose that when she came to the highroad, she crossed it, and struck again into the woods. Like the famous Hippety-Hop, —

> " Who once got to going, and could n't stop," —

she descended a steep bank, forded a shallow river, in short, experienced perils by land and perils by water, before she was found wandering quite beside herself, in an open meadow, when she was promptly returned to her friends.

The quiet that reigns at Playfield has added many charms to life. Through the day it is broken by song birds, the zephyrs, that are ever seeking us out to refresh us, the sound of crickets and bees. Occasionally the wind, as it sweeps by us, bears a stray message from the world at our feet; the bay of a hound, the echo of a voice, or a snatch of song or laughter in the distance, the roll of a wagon on the road down by the lake, sometimes the whistle of the trains six miles distant, or the peal of the village church bell three miles away. The acoustic properties of the hilltop are perfect; it is like an immense sounding-board.

Yet more dear to us is that deeper and more conscious stillness of a night in autumn or early spring, unbroken by so much as a cricket. We fancy, as we stand on our doorstep in the moonlight, that we can hear the whirring of the earth's axis in its socket; that we can detect the faint swish of the stars as they spin on in their course, or the more audible hiss of a falling meteor. As we gaze, the earth drops away and we come close to our nearest neighbors, the Pleiades; we almost arrive at terms of intimacy with Arcturus; and those glittering belles in the galaxy of beauty, Capella and Vega, smile upon us as they flash on in their intricate mazes through the heavens.

The nights are beautiful and as varied as the days; one was so ethereal that it wafts like a dream before me as I recall it. The ground was covered with snow; the bare trees were delicately outlined in gray against a silvery sky; the moon was full, but half-veiled by fleeces of white clouds, while gauze-like drifts of vapor floated up from the ground and mingled with the clouds. There was no sound, no color, scarcely any form. All was vaporous and inchoate, as in the early days when the earth was a nebulous mist.

As I have said elsewhere, life is essentially dream-like and unreal in the country, but I was not prepared for a surprise that awaited me when I returned to the great world after three years of solitude. A

fantastic skepticism concerning cities, men, and commerce had grown up in my mind, and when I entered the roar and confusion of New York city, it seemed as if it were no longer familiar as of old, but that it was the result of a conjurer's trick; that its men and women, representing such different interests, were but puppets going through a mimic show for my entertainment; that the shops and merchandise, the crowds and equipages, the galleries and libraries, the music and glitter, were but illusions; that the theatre was a dream within a dream,—phantasms each and all. I could not divest myself of the strange fancy that when I departed, the enchanted city, which was but a creation of my own fancy, would sink noiselessly into the ground, its architecture would dissolve as the clouds, its people vanish as ghosts. When I again stood on our hill and looked in that direction and saw no sign and caught no sound, I doubted more than ever if the great spaces stretching off on either hand held anything more living than stars and suns, anything more tangible than the waves of heat that quiver and vibrate in the clear sunlight.

The silence we enjoy, and the sights we see, add a quickened power of perception to our faculties. They furnish new gauges by which to measure the music in sounds. Fresh from Playfield, where every sound has an agreeable modulation and a meaning, I heard at midnight in New York what is familiar

to dwellers in cities along the coast, the blowing of foghorns on the vessels in the harbor, a noise I had never before properly appreciated, having thought only of its practical uses. As the blasts reached my ears, sounding at long intervals, each in a different key, their music was slow and stately as a requiem, like solemn strains from a mysterious, far-off sphere, and conveyed the idea of infinite remoteness, yet addressing the greatest depths of the soul; a sublime harmony, beating the measure of the universe, filling the vault of heaven. To my stimulated imagination, at one supreme moment my soul swung loose from earthly moorings, and caught a glimpse of its lofty destiny. It felt itself the only living reality in God's universe, yet was not afraid. Alone it stood, surrounded by æons of time and depth upon depth of space, all resonant with celestial chords.

At Playfield our imagination is the most active of our faculties; for wherever we look, we face mysteries, — mysteries of growth, mysteries of form and color, mysteries of cause, mysteries of shadows. Some we try to explain, some we like to observe without attempting an explanation; others we treat as symbols in the natural world of the spiritual side of Nature, and seek thus to interpret them.

A constant source of admiration is the way Nature endlessly repeats herself, while giving that touch of

variety which marks divine handiwork. Light is an example, which shines primarily from the sun, is reflected in the moon, is caught up and radiated from every river, pond, or pool; it quivers in the dewdrop, in the glitter of snowflakes, in the mica that spangles rocks. Taking the rainbow as a text, observe how Nature has loved to play with its prismatic colors, which she has repeated in the spray of waterfalls, in dewdrops, soap-bubbles, in the nacre of shells, in crystals, gems, in ice-fields and stagnant ponds. Nature repeats the whole range of smells in her flowers as the perfume of musk-producing animals, the odor of snakes and vermin, the bitter smell of acids and minerals, the fœtor of carrion, the pungency of spices, and the flavor of fruits. Mark the similarity in form of the waves made on sand by the action of water and the wave lines made by the wind on snow. The sound of a wind passing over a forest or that sings in a single pine is but the minimized sound made by the distant sea.

> "The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape
> With fold to fold of mountain or of cape;"

repeating color as well as form. Admirably has Thoreau indicated the fluid character of the universe, with its currents or rivers of water and air, the rivers of sap in trees, the flowing of branches into the air, and roots into the soil, rivers of rock

and ore in the earth; rivers of stars in the heavens, and thoughts that flow and circulate among men.

Nature has played with form as she has with color and light. The general outline made by a flock of wild geese flying is the same, on a larger scale, as that of the single bird with outspread wings. This use of form on a different scale is everywhere observable in plant life. The general outline of compound foliage is duplicated in the separate leaflets, as in the rose, meadow rue, blackberry, and honey locust; the umbellets and involucels of the wild carrot are but miniatures of the larger umbel and involucre. Again, the blade of a leaf is but a diminutive outline of the tree on which it grows, its stem representing the trunk. Observe the cordate character of the apple-tree and its leaf; the taper-pointed gray birch with its acuminate leaf; the plumelike branches of the sugar maple with its deeply incised foliage; or the widespreading plane-tree with its broad leafage.

Then she has a happy way of using the same form interchangeably in both flower and leaf. If you hold a twig of lilac in your hand, and look at it from the top, you will see it has no terminal bud, but in its place a pair of leaves at the tip of the stalk, which alternate with the next pair just below. This manner of radiation from the stalk causes the leaves to group themselves in fours, a counterpart

in green of the spreading lobes of the tubular corolla. In countless instances, plants repeat themselves in foliage and corolla.

These are but a few of the things we have noted without trying to understand, simply accepting them as facts. But we are constantly challenging some natural objects to explain themselves. For years we studied birch bark, attempting to explain the horizontal lines which appear not only on the epidermis, but are embossed upon all the papery tissues until you reach the corky layer. Only the other day I learned that these lines are the porous lattice windows through which the birch is enabled to breathe, the bark being so closely grained it would otherwise suffocate. Curiously enough the same thing appears in the cherry, save that the lines are placed vertically instead of horizontally, the former direction being taken as the cherry is a higher type in the vegetable world and uses a nobler line, — the vertical. When I sit in the garden while Adam is hoeing, and see a slender fly stop short in its wild flight, and rush to the edge of the grass-land that borders the garden, and tap this tiny cliff not once or twice, but scores of times, until it wearies me to look at it, I ask, why does it do it? I presume a naturalist would tell me that is its way of depositing eggs; but why does it choose this curious method? When I see a willow-tree, cut and piled up in cordwood, sending out shoots from the

split logs, which grow to the length of a foot, I ask wherein the vitality of this tree, with its soft and perishable wood, differentiates from the hardy evergreens which scarcely endure the most careful transplanting. Similar questionings arise regarding a Red Astrachan apple-tree that bears fruit on one half of its branches each year, one part alternating with the other. The half that bears fruit loses its leaves early, while the barren half that year remains in full leafage until the late frosts. The next year this is just reversed. What fortuitous circumstances cause this alternation, so that each year we gather almost a full crop of fruit? Nurserymen cannot always secure this at will by grafting at different times. Why is it that slow-growing trees are slower of combustion and give out a fiercer heat than those of a more rapid growth? Is it the result of the conservation of added years of summer heat, and a greater accumulation of the sunlight's forces? Used as a fertilizer, the ashes indicate the same difference, those of hard wood retaining their virtue a longer period than those of soft wood. It is as if Nature had put her everlasting mark upon faithful, patient work in her universe. Whether it is in a plant or tree, or in man's efforts in art and literature, the slow-growing outlasts the hastily developed. The ephemera that fulfils the entire functions of existence in a single day is no surer of a speedy death than the book written to please the taste of

the passing hour. Honest life-blood must go into a thing to give it vitality.

An interesting episode occurred in an ants' colony one morning which gave rise to much speculation. In splitting off a thin crust from a boulder, by chance a nest of ants was laid bare. The utmost confusion ensued, in which I could see the chief cause of their solicitude was the larvæ. As if a word of command had been passed along the line, each fell to work to remove the eggs to a place of safety. I could not distinguish the general in charge, but with one accord they bore their load to the same spot. Before the eggs were entirely removed, I determined to see how they would behave under a second catastrophe. I wished to see if they could recover from a second shock as readily as they had from the first. I gently disturbed the second nest, not enough to destroy it, but enough to shake their confidence in its security. For a moment they quite lost their heads; but as I watched them, it was evident another command was issued, or rather two; for while a part of the colony undertook to carry the larvæ to still another place, a number were dispatched to spread the news of the latest disaster. These latter absorbed my whole attention. I could see them approach those who were on their way from the original home to the first temporary quarters. They would pause the briefest conceivable time, not touching each other

with their antennæ, but in some inscrutable way communicate the terrible message. Instantly the one bearing the larvæ no longer directed his steps to the second place as he had been doing, but proceeded to the third, which was very remote and in quite another direction. I watched particularly to see if any would fail to act upon the later instructions: not a single burden-bearer went to the second place from the original home, though many passed between the second and third in their work of removal. It was a marvel of generalship, and showed the ant is capable of instantaneous recovery, quick and ready in resources. But what was the mode of communication? Are the vibrations of their voice beyond the range of our hearing? What was it that determined the choice of a place of refuge? What qualifications entitle one to the rank of a general among ants?

And pray, since we are fairly launched upon questions, from what quarter of the heavens, and at what hour of the day, does the law of crystallization begin to operate? that force which moulds the moisture of the air into snowflakes without noise or commotion. And to what adytum does this alchemist withdraw when there are no snowflakes to make; and what is a force like when it is passive and inoperative? In the economy of nature, has it some secondary office with which it might occupy the idle months from June until September? I am

a trifle dazed, when living under the continuous operation of busy laws such as gravitation, growth, and decay, to meet a law of lazy and intermittent habits like this one of crystallization. I very ignorantly grew up with the idea that after the earth was formed and the dry land, and all that in it is, say early in the afternoon of the third day according to the Mosaic record, when the grass began to grow, this law naturally became inoperative from disuse, for everything was crystallized that could be, save now and then a chemical combination that did not count for much to my mind; and it was with a mental shock that I was brought face to face with what I fancied non-existent, by reason of a snowflake alighting on my sleeve. Suddenly I was awakened to the fact that, as a special creation, this snowflake had its place and use in God's world; that it was the result of an active energy, which was able to make manifest the unseen, and that this fragile flake was obedient to the natural laws of beauty, symmetry, growth, and decay. For a brief moment did the reality of the snowflake reveal itself to my astonished vision; for one instant I seemed to pass beyond the superficial and outward form to its inward character, and its eternal relations with all cosmic forces. But as a Hindu sage says of Nature, "Once aware of being seen, she does not again expose herself to the gaze of the soul." While I was yet gazing, my momen-

tary penetration of this miracle vanished, my eyes were darkened, so that I merely saw its external form, and I was left to puzzle over this question : If this force exists and silently works, is intangible and imperceptible to our senses except in its results, giving evidence of itself only in certain parts of the globe, under certain atmospheric conditions, how many other forces are operating of which we are ignorant, or blindly confuse with the few that men have dimly recognized but have never wholly grasped ?

On turning to nature after watching a kaleidoscope, one is impressed with the truth that the infinite varieties of matter—rocks, fluids, fire and gases, the vegetable and animal kingdoms, odors, tastes, sensations, productions of man in art, literature, music, all mental operations, all spiritual aspirations —are reducible to one elemental substance, and the forces which play upon matter are but many manifestations of one simple force.

How shall man pierce through so many guises to find this last residuum of matter, this last mode of energy ?

These are a few of the things we observe and try to explain by natural laws ; but how countless are the mysterious symbols about us that are the ciphers by which Nature would have us spell out higher spiritual truths ; facts clearly implying that they belong to a nature beyond the ordinary, of

which region we live only on the outskirts. Through our rudimentary senses, but more by our instincts and intuitions, do we catch glimpses of the interpretation. What is the real meaning of Nature's use of the geometric forms of the angle, the circle, and the oval? Wherever the angle is used, it represents the dead and inanimate side of creation, as in the crystals of snowflakes and minerals; whereas the curve of the circle and oval are the concomitants of life, as in the cell of the protoplasm and the formation of all cellular tissue; for even where the cells take the form of hexagons, as in reeds and sedges and the honeycomb of insects, the form is the result of pressure on soft round cells. All creatures build in curves, the birds, mice, and hens in their nests, the beaver in his mound, the ground spider in his hole, the ant in her hill, and hornets and wasps in their houses. Man in his primitive state has followed this instinct in the construction of the wigwam, adobe, and mounds. Pursuing it further, if a line be made to include a leaf, it will vary from the long ellipse of grasses to the circle of the nasturtium. If a line inclose a flower, it will show the same result. Man falls within an ellipse, and in all outlines which Nature uses, whether in bird, beast, or plant, it is impossible to surprise her in the use of an absolutely straight line. The higher the order in creation, as in man, the more subtile and complex are the curves, and

the lower the order, the nearer she comes to the form restricted to the inanimate world, as in the almost straight line of sedges and reptiles; yet even here is involved an imperceptible and delicate curve.

Not only has she identified the curve with life, but also with motion. Whether you study the planets in their orbits, the motion of fluids, gases, air, or smoke from a passing engine; or whether you seek it in vibrations of heat, light, sound, color, electricity, the gliding of snakes, the circling of birds, the flitting of insects, — all follow the curved line. There are yet more involved applications than these, where Nature, in seeking to express the permanence and durability of the material world in some living creation, adroitly introduces the symbol of the material world, the angle, or rather the triangle. Where certain sedges grow in swift currents of water, Nature secures greater power of resistance by casting the culm in the form of a concave triangle, which cleaves the water like a knife, while a transverse section of those that grow in marshy ground or by banks out of the current is a convex triangle where the stem is not a hollow cylinder. While this may not be invariable in aquatic plants, it is one of her uses of an unusual form to serve a special purpose.

We see the triangle used in the general outline of evergreen trees, whose tough fibre and terebin-

thine property make them suitable for masts, poles, and building purposes, where durability is the essential quality; for example, the pine, cedar, spruce, hemlock, and tamarack, and another closely allied to it, the larch. Strangely enough, their leaves or rather needles approximate very closely a straight line. On the other hand, where beauty, shade, or fruitage are the objects, as in the elm, poplar, beech, maple, and birch, whose wood is not so durable when exposed to the action of air and water, and all fruit trees, the tree's outline falls within a vertical or horizontal oval. There is no need to follow this point further; any one can take these two forms and apply them as touchstones to determine the character of art, architecture, design, physiognomy, chirography; the types are persistent wherever found. The curve will always present a higher state of development, more of the spiritual; though in ornament a modification through the introduction of the angle or straight line gives a greater balance, repose, and stability than if composed entirely of curves.

What is the meaning of this? and what is the truth involved in Nature's use of the horizontal and vertical lines, which are as full of significance as the curve and angle? And what does she wish to convey in the mystical use of number, repeating, as in the bramble, the number five in the pentagonal stem, in the five leaflets of the compound foliage,

the branching in fives of the stems from the main stalk, the flower further perplexing us with the five of its calyx and corolla? Whole families are constructed in series of threes, or fours, beginning with the stems and carrying it out to the divisions of the seed vessel and number of stamens.

Nor is this recurrence of number confined to plant life alone. Nature abounds in sequences of every sort, and they are as full of charm as of suggestion. What lies embodied in the strange analogy between the divisions of time we term day and night, periods of work and rest, of light and darkness, which are repeated and accentuated in the longer divisions of summer and winter, — a time of activity in nature alternating with a time of repose; or again finding a larger and fuller expression in life and death. May we apply fearlessly the suggestions offered in the two lesser examples of night and winter to interpret that great mystery, death? Is it a brief resting or resumption of pure spirit before the soul again takes up the activities of a new existence? Or is life a brief dream of the night, and death the waking reality?

Nature overflows with sentiment and manifests the finest sense of appropriateness in her management of details. In making the violet, for instance, with infinite delicacy she has preserved modest unobtrusiveness in the neutral color of the flower, the low growth, the inclined head, and small single

blossom. It was in a dashing mood she modelled the poppy, with its flare of color, and widely flaunting petals, and expansive, free growth. How cunningly has she enhanced the value of white flowers by adding a richness of perfume that is rare in colored blooms. With what subtilty of feeling she has mixed her colors for the different seasons, mingling with the tender greens of spring the blush pink, the lilac, lavender, the white, pale blue, and creamy yellow of the early spring flowers. In autumn she paints with a different hand, and maintains the key boldly struck by the rich tints of foliage trees, in the brilliant orange, red, yellow, and purple of the late summer and autumn flowers. That she loves to accentuate her mysteries is clearly seen in the way she sheathes her buds in layer on layer of scales, and twists her flower buds into intricate convolutions, and crumples the green tissues of new leaves into unrecognizable shapes, and tightly wraps her ferns in spirals. In winter we look incredulously at the bare vines and trees; where has Nature packed away the verdure of the coming season? and in what subterranean chambers does she imprison her summer flowers? Our garden is just as much a world of enchantment and magic as the gardens of the Arabian Nights. The day of marvels has never ceased; we need not the enchanters of ancient Egypt to bewilder the modern age. About our doorstep lies that which outrivals all

their seeming miracles. We need not the handwriting on the wall to astonish the eyes. If we were able to decipher the lichen hieroglyphs, what prophesies we could make! not foretelling death and destruction, but setting forth the hidden counsels of Nature. Here are writ the secrets of time and eternity; here are published the laws of the universe, the principles of life and death, and the meaning of existence. Should a profane hand erase these mystic characters, they will rewrite themselves before another year. Nature does not allow any space to remain bare long, but prints her alphabets in fine and coarse type on all the waste places of the earth. What is the true significance of all this sentiment, this harmony, this uninterpreted wisdom?

Water is the most delightful of mysteries. It is the bond that links the earth and sky. Through rain and dew the heavens descend to refresh the earth, and earth flashes back a rainbow in answer. The lower world seeks to escape through clouds and mingle its fragments with the skies.

Again, the earth is dissolved and the sky is brought within easy reach in the reflection of a pool of water. In an instant the mighty distance of Uranus is swept away and one can touch it with his finger. On the smooth surface, within a few yards of each other, lie planets and constellations in glittering confusion. By shifting his position he can turn the kaleidoscope of the heavens, and half the

universe lies at his feet. As haze, this daughter of earth and air releases the material world from form and substitutes ethereal beauty. It is the flux which melts one object into another and fuses the earth.

To my mind, no message of Nature is so alluring, so inexplicable, as her shadows. They are so like the objects they accompany, but stripped of all use and properties, as of color, fragrance, intelligence; mere airy semblances, with a thousand variations of their own, according to the relative position and strength of light falling upon them. What idea does the shadow of a man convey of what he is and feels, — his thoughts, his loves, his hates, his aspirations, — though it walks with him, is his inseparable companion from birth, and duplicates all that he does; a type, a symbol of a possible spiritual truth, what is it? Can it mean that as far above the plane of this life as the shadow is below it exists for each of us a spiritual side which, though unseen, is linked as indissolubly with the body as the strange paradox which is so perfect, yet so incomplete a duplicate of it? Can it be that the man is but as faint an expression of that fuller side as the shadow is of the man, though he is at the same time an essential expression of it? Everywhere about us are proofs that in the lower lie hints of the higher. Man occupies that middle position in creation, where all below him is interpretative of all beyond him which is

speculative; he has no equivalent. He embodies and lives the separate lives of a trinity, — shadow, matter, spirit.

Reflections seen in water are but another form of the shadow. When you see pictured in the smooth surface of a lake the landscape, the mountains rising above, surrounding objects distinctly mirrored in it, even to the clouds in the sky, could you grasp any conception of what these things were, if you were brought suddenly to face this picture, never having seen a forest, a mountain, or trees, or sky? if, as actual realities in your experience, all these things were absolutely unknown to you? As you look at the intangible, flat semblance, which is disturbed by a breath of an unseen wind, or marred by sticking your finger into it, what could you guess of the substantial character of matter as it exists, — of the stability and permanence of mountains and forests, of the rounded form of trees and their life and growth, of the fragrance of flowers, the taste of fruit, the song of birds in the branches, you who know nothing of material objects, save as you see them for the first time in a play of color on a film of water? What could you guess of the warm sunshine in the forest paths, of the delicious refreshment from the breezes, of the life and love and happiness of two human beings under the roof of their small cottage, which is but a gray speck in the green? Though these things are revealed in the

mirrored picture, yet to one who did not know the conditions of life as it is lived on this earth, this image, perfect as it is to the smallest details, would convey no idea of the thing portrayed. This world of solids would lie beyond any possibility of comprehension by a mind that had known nothing in its experience except a world of surfaces, — the bare idea of which requires a strong imagination to grasp, even faintly. A mind that knew only length and breadth, as in the mirrored picture, could not conceive how much was added in that third dimension, — thickness. This may be typical and interpretative of our relation to the other world, which the instinct of mankind has so long predicted. The material objects, those which constitute the environment of this life, may be the semblances of the spiritual existence, though they are as infinitely removed from the actual conditions of that future state as the colored representation in the lake is removed from the fulness of life it simulates. Yet why can it not be that the things of this life are prophetic of the next, except that they give no accurate hint of the amplitude and scope and extension they will undergo in a world of four dimensions? It is rather a curious thing that at the limit of higher mathematics men touch upon something that is beyond their comprehension, that does not seem to fall under foregoing laws, and with which they can do nothing; and this they call the fourth

dimension. We touch this fourth dimension on all sides, in science, in metaphysics, as well as in nature. Viewed in this light, nothing in the universe is insignificant, all is as a germ, like the tiny seed which gives no evidence in itself of the beautiful possibilities which lie locked up in the single cell that will come with full development.

In maintaining such an attitude toward nature, all days are holy days; at any moment the high priest is likely to appear before the temple to disclose some truth, to interpret some similitude, to draw the corner of the veil for an instant from some mystery, or expound some problem of existence. When you have caught these faint intimations of the Real, you feel that the true knowledge, such as the soul longs for, is not to be learned from universities, is not to be communicated by cities, but by natural objects. Since it comes through direct revelations of nature, he who hungers after spiritual truth should place himself where the sibylline leaves are scattered, to get it fresh and unpolluted at the sources of inspiration. Under nature's instruction, you will probably readjust many of your theories, and spiritualize your creed; for the universality of nature's teachings is not compatible with dogma, nor is it narrowed to fit personal prejudice. You may change your conceptions about life and death; you may cease to believe you enter the spiritual life because you die to this; but transposing it, it may

run thus: you lose the senses and body of this world when you enter the spiritual world, for the simple reason you have no more use for them in a larger existence than a butterfly has for dragging about with it the cast shell of its wormhood; and it is an evidence of fuller life, and not death, that the cast shell of the earthly body grows cold and corrupt, having lost its spirit.

Yes, Playfield is the council chamber of the gods, where they convene to discuss eternal questions, and he who listens silently and reverently, and ponders in his heart what he hears, will find his thought infinitely expanded and liberated, and his life infused with a divine vigor.

EXCURSIONS

Yesterdays look backwards with a smile.

YOUNG.

EXCURSIONS

It is possible, suggests Thoreau, to continue even our favorite employment to the point where we rob it of sentiment. When we felt sentiment in jeopardy, we planned an excursion to some distant place. We noted some remote point in our landscape and said, "We will go there to-day." As a result, there are few places of interest within a radius of twenty miles that we have not visited. In order that we might witness the whole panorama of the day, we usually began our pilgrimages so early that cobwebs, swinging as fairy hammocks over the moss, were still empearled with dew, the fresh coolness of the dawn lingered, the matin chorus had scarcely concluded, and the morning shadows fell long upon the road. "All the world reposes in beauty to him who preserves equipoise in his life."

As we took some new direction, we were charmed with the unfamiliar appearance of well-known objects. We derived an unexpected pleasure from the novel aspect of the lake along whose shores we daily drive when we saw it from a distant hill-top. Our own hill-slope when seen across a valley

surprised us, as did the mountains, which we had fancied were grouped about us in a crescent shape, while now we saw they straightened themselves out, and had a trend and direction of their own. It is a great experience to drive around an object which ordinarily you drive by. Thus each added mile had a fresh import.

It was not merely the mountain peaks which interested us, the entire prospect was full of unexpectedness. No drive reminded us of any other, and each had its own character and surprises. The chief attraction of one might be a huge boulder thickly encrusted with a growth of sword ferns, so highly prized; of another it was a depth of wood so dense and luxuriant in ferns and flowers that it fulfilled my dream of what a tropical forest is like. Perhaps it was a foaming mountain brook, with cascades and overarching trees; or a shaded watering-trough, so thoughtfully provided throughout these mountain roads. The trough is usually a half hogshead sunk in the ground, with a deliciously cool stream of water dripping into it, conveyed from some distant spring by means of slender tree-trunks, lapping on each other, making a rude, mossy, and wholly delightful aqueduct. Nor was it necessary to take another road on the return home to enjoy a continuous pleasure in driving. If the eye is observant, the outlook is entirely different, and the landscape viewed from the

north is very unlike what it was viewed from the south. If you doubt this, note some plant by the roadside, with the intention of gathering it as you come back, and the chances are ten to one, as you return, you will fail to recognize the spot where it grows. You look at another angle of vision and all is changed.

The human element formed quite a feature of our scenery, and often presented interesting subjects for artists. In early summer we saw men brushing in the seed, as they call it, which is accomplished by yoking a pair of oxen to a number of small birches, whose finely divided twigs covered with leaves drew a thin coating of soil over the freshly scattered seed. Once we saw a pathetic picture, an aged woman dropping seed into the brown furrows, followed closely by a young daughter with pink and white complexion, and a wee child. One did not need to be told that those were the widowed and fatherless. It was too clearly betrayed in the feminine character of the scarecrows, which were arrayed not in trousers and old coats, but in petticoats, faded straw bonnets, and tattered parasols. Framed by blossoming apple-trees and subdued by a background of purple mountains, this picture had the strength and simplicity of a Millet. A more joyous subject was offered by two youngsters sitting on the edge of a small culvert with their feet dangling over, fishing in the stream below. They had a

single birch pole, and were such enthusiastic sportsmen that when we passed they hailed us as a pair of fellow revellers, and one proudly held up a single minnow four inches long, which, relatively to the size of the boy, was as large a catch as a four-pound trout would be to a man. Nature has a felicitous way of preserving nice proportions.

Drives through a varied country are calculated to make one break the Tenth Commandment, for he covets every beautiful cluster of white birches, every majestic elm or sweeping willow, every natural rockery, tufted in all its crevices with ferns. Each waterfall and pond, each curious freak and twist of nature, stirs his cupidity. He wishes he could take them up bodily and transport them to his own homestead. It is a more virulent form of the collector's mania, and on a more extensive scale. Yet why should one covet his neighbor's goods when they are already his own in the truest and best sense? Though he holds but one small title-deed to an hundred acres, his estate extends up the mountain-sides, across the valley, beyond the river, to the range twenty miles distant. He enjoys the quiet contemplation of his possessions from one little corner of it, while a multitude toils in the cultivation of these unnumbered acres. He represents that favored class which, though boundlessly rich, enjoys property without its taxes and cares, without the labor of improvement. He gladly

yields the crops, the fruit of the orchards, and the increase of the cattle fattening in the meadows, as a return for the labor expended on his vast estate. He cares naught for the income, so long as he is permitted an undisputed use of its loveliness and variety.

The Playmates took many excursions, but the most perfect one was on a June day, one of their many anniversaries (and they celebrate more anniversaries than there are saints' days in the calendar). The intention was to visit the genial acquaintance from Maine, mentioned in a previous chapter. The day was soft and brilliant in the morning, but mellowed later by an ethereal haze.

"Fine summer spray on inland seas."

We drove for hours through entirely unknown country, and after the noon hour had passed without reaching our destination, we abandoned our purpose of pushing on further, and sought some spot worthy to celebrate so fine a day. We aim to carry out the true spirit of a holiday, and if by chance we have miscalculated distances, and grow weary and hungry before reaching our Mecca, we set aside our plans, no matter how long we may have cherished them, and hold a revel in the first place that beguiles us. Nature is so prodigal with her scenery and beauty in this region that one can find an appropriate banquet hall under almost any

tree. We encamped at the edge of a sugar maple grove under which was a smooth green turf, a rare thing to find in a New Hampshire wood. We made the table as dainty as possible with vines and flowers, and surrounded and shaded by this background of green, we could see extending in front of us a long narrow valley which widened as it neared the horizon line. Flanking the valley on either side were chains of mountains that melted into the distant plain. It was as if we were looking at an infinite perspective, which effect was enhanced by the haze which veiled the earth, so that earth and sky were imperceptibly blended. It added that touch of dreaminess and unreality which a perfect holiday requires. About us the sunshine lay clear and warm. Here was the fair retreat men sigh for, a place realizing the ideal of poets. As the feasts of the gods were followed by music and song, we complied with the requirements, then Adam read "The Gleam" and Emerson's "Nature," while we reclined on a rustic seat made by the bole and twisted roots of a stately tree.

Truly, the most excellent society is within one of solitude. The finest speech is the silence of two souls who have passed beyond the need of communication and hear and respond inwardly. The world during that afternoon was as remote as the intangible hills which faded into the haze of the valley. The serenity and stillness were undisturbed by

so much as a passing cloud. No faintest sound reached our ears to remind us of the busy markets where men bought and sold that day, not knowing it was sacred. Though one may journey many weary years in after life, he will ever be refreshed by the memory of such a day.

On another occasion we visited a strange geologic formation, once famous as the shelter for a tribe of Indians, though now it is scarcely known even by those who live in its immediate vicinity. It is a shallow cavern hollowed out of the rocks in the side of a low mountain. The lofty arched roof is as smooth as if it were a piece of fine masonry. At one side is a niche in the wall, blackened by smoke, giving evidence of having been used as a sort of oven. It is a rude abode for primitive housekeeping, and awakens the wild fancies one naturally weaves about such a shelter. The cavern, very wide at the mouth, is placed high up on the side of this eminence, and has a magnificent view of valley and mountains beyond. It is very difficult to find this cavern, so we inquired at a cottage for a guide.

"There is no one about here who could go with you," said a woman who came to the door, in response to our inquiry.

"I think I could go," interrupted a man who was huddled up in a chair in the corner of the hut.

"You, Tim!" exclaimed the woman in surprise; "surely you would n't think of going!"

Then turning to us she explained, "My man hez been pretty slim all spring. He 's so laid up with rheumatiz that he hez n't been as far as the woodpile for two weeks. I 've had to split the wood and do all the chores, and wait on him beside. Tim, you shan't go!" she snapped vindictively, as she saw the supposably incapacitated man draw his shoes on hastily, preparatory to starting.

But the lure of a fee was too much for the impoverished Timothy, and no matter what his disabilities had been up to the moment the proposal was made, he now assumed quite a sprightly gait as he walked to our mountain wagon and climbed in behind, leaving his wrathful spouse to surmise that mensuration is not an exact science, but deals with distances relatively; that the distance to the woodpile at the back door is greater when it is to accommodate a scolding wife than a three-mile tramp through woods over boulders and fallen trees with a reward in sight.

The low farmhouses by the wayside could contribute their share of the unwritten tragedy and comedy of men and women. Here human nature is much the same as it is in cities, only that its weaknesses, vanities, and deceits are betrayed with a straightforward simplicity. There is nothing covert about the evil-doer's conduct, or tortuous about his methods. When he thieves, it is as

openly and naturally as the cat does from the pantry. When he cheats, or lies, or seduces the farmer's daughter, he does it with the eyes of the community upon him. The country is full of ghosts and superstitions. On the other hand, there are beautiful examples of generosity and self-sacrifice, fidelity, heroism, and unswerving integrity, that can scarcely be matched in a more complex life.

One deserted house had a singular history. Many years ago, when there were still traces of the original Indian tribes, a young man, who was the only child and sole support of a widowed mother, met a young squaw and secretly married her. It was with difficulty that he brought about a reconciliation between his wife and mother. He brought her home, however, and they thought the usual domestic life lay before them. For the sake of her husband the wife tried to adjust herself to the restraints of the strict New England household, but she grew more and more restless and unhappy. Rumors were current that when storms raged fiercest, she was in the habit of wandering forth at night with hair flying and in scanty attire, as if her pent-up life sought expression in gales and tempests. Sometimes she disappeared for days, when the neighborhood was roused to search for her. The restrictions of civilized life became such a bondage to this free, untamed creature that she

implored her husband to flee with her to the forests. In the unequal conflict between love for his wife and duty toward his mother, love conquered, and one night they both disappeared, leaving no trace behind them. Through lumbermen who worked on the mountain-side, the news was brought to the mother that the fugitives had built a rude cabin for themselves in a most inaccessible place near the top of one of the mountains. But these rumors were scarcely credited, for years went by without the least sign of their existence, and the mother had long given up her son as dead. In the midst of a howling snowstorm, one winter day, the Indian woman appeared at the widow's door. Barefooted, with head uncovered, and thinly clad, she dragged behind her a rudely constructed sledge, upon which lay the dead body of her husband. Painfully she had labored down the mountain-side, sometimes compelled to bear the burden in her arms, in order that she might restore the dead man to his mother. Though he had been hers in life, the wife recognized a mother's claim at death. The widowed mother, softened by years of grief and loss, begged the exhausted creature to remain with her, to forget the past, and live with her as a daughter. To all her entreaties the woman shook her head; she would not accept so much as a morsel of food, and gazing with one long impassioned look at the face of the dead man, she turned

and left the house with tearless eyes. Having offered what retribution she could, she disappeared, and was never heard of afterward.

Close by in another cottage lived a woman, within the memory of the present generation, who was reputed to be a witch. The countryside was full of stories about the mischief she did: she cast spells on her neighbors' cattle so that they were barren, or died; she blasted their crops, and produced sickness in the families of those who tried to molest her. One day she entered the house of a neighbor, whom she fancied had done her a slight wrong, and striking the woman three times upon the back, she pronounced a curse upon her. From that hour the woman lost her reason, and became a raving maniac. After a year had elapsed (for even a witch's heart is tempered with mercy), the witch, thinking her victim had fully expiated her wrong, again appeared at the house, and to undo the former spell, she again struck the woman three times on the back while she muttered an incantation. Then, looking at her, she said, "You are all right now," and strange to tell, the woman immediately recovered her reason. This tale is firmly believed by the simple country folk, as is also the uncanny story of an ineffaceable blood-spot on the floor of a certain cottage, near which appears at a given time each year a red taper that burns through the night and disappears with the rising sun.

On one of our excursions, after journeying twenty miles to the westward beyond the Sandwich range, we stopped at a farmhouse remote from the highway. It was strangely located in a valley, shut in by high hills that rose but a short distance from the cottage, a dismal, forlorn spot, though kept with neatness and order. On every side we saw great stone walls three times the usual thickness. The land had been denuded of its trees, and there was not a single feature to redeem the bleak waste. The owner came out to greet us and tie the horse. Never have I seen such eyes as he had — large, clear, lustrous blue eyes, full of dreams and mysticism; eyes that haunt one afterward with their beauty and recall the days of heroes. Instinctively I felt drawn to the man who could afford to wear such holiday eyes on common occasions. He treated us with great cordiality, and gradually we drew him out regarding his life and work, and he related his history.

Three generations back, his ancestors had been the pioneers who had received the original grant to this wild district. Tree by tree they had cleared the land for cultivation. So bent were they on this sole object, they neglected to leave any for shade or protection from the winter winds. One by one they had dug the rocks and boulders out of the thin, poor soil to build the stone walls which served to keep their cattle and sheep inclosed. Year after year, three generations had toiled and

slaved here, eking out the scantiest living, unable to add anything to the productiveness of the farm, which steadily deteriorated. They had wasted brawn and muscle, they had spent their life and heart's blood, upon this implacable bit of land. To what end? Over one hundred years of ceaseless labor, exposure, and saving had not added a dollar to the value of the farm, nor to the wealth of the owners. They had been living examples of Sisyphus, condemned eternally to roll a stone to the top of a hill only to see it fall to the foot again. The sons of the present generation had died before reaching manhood, and the father, then over seventy, amid the ruins of his life was beginning to measure the sheer wantonness of all this human expenditure. He was too feeble to carry on the work alone, and too poor to employ the services of others. The farm was so worthless that it would not yield the most miserable stipend if he sold it and tried to live elsewhere. He was crushed under the weight of the incubus that he and his fathers had carried for over a century. Bereaved, defeated, and utterly spent, he with the glorious eyes lived deaf and blind to any charm or consolation of nature. In his eagerness to get every farthing from the soil, he would ruthlessly plough up the flowers planted by his wife in the dooryard. "What 's the good of them anyhow?" he would inquire; "flowers are all alike, they 're only weeds."

We caught a more pitiful glimpse of their history when we entered their living-room, with its bare, uneven floor and cheap stove, three straight-backed chairs, and tattered sofa. Was it for these bald necessities they had expended their sinew? Was it here that they lived each seven days of the week? How completely had the weight of those hundred years crushed out the natural craving for comfort! I felt stifled by the futile misery of those remorseless years. I was unprepared for the wonders of the parlor, to which we were admitted with a great show of pride by the housewife. Who could do justice to the bizarre tawdriness of that parlor, with its closed blinds and drawn shades; redolent of the damp and mouldy smell of an unused room; stiff with coarse, starched lace curtains; crowded to overflowing with cheap furniture, which glistened with varnish and gilt traceries; resplendent with a gay carpet and flaming advertising lithographs of soaps and oatmeals. On the walls, staring stolidly down at this supposed elegance, were large crayon travesties of their young boys, ghastly mockeries of the dear dead. It was horrible; it was tragic to see the way in which these poor starved souls had sought to express their crude ideas of beauty. No token of comfort or enjoyment marked their daily life, but they pinched their poverty to extract the little which, in their self-humiliation, was too good for them to enjoy freely. I went away with a

bitter cry in my heart. What is existence worth when it is stripped of freedom, dignity, and grace? Death, death a thousand times is to be preferred to years full of sordidness and stint and beggarly needs.

As if to furnish an antidote to this experience, fortune led us, in our next excursion, to beg a bucket of water at a cottage shaded by beautiful willows and fairly embowered in flowers. We heard the click of a machine as we tied the horse, and approaching the small weather-stained house, we saw upon the doorstep a middle-aged country woman, neatly and becomingly dressed, paring and stringing apples. She was drying them for the market, and already the front of the house was festooned with her handiwork. We stood in mute admiration of her garden with its luxuriance and wealth of color. It was a lovely tangle of scarlet and gold; poppies, peonies, petunias, portulacas, and phlox intermingled with marigolds, nasturtiums, sunflowers, sweet fern, and verbenas. The rustic fence which inclosed it was covered with vines. Charmed with her surroundings and her speech, we made her quite a visit. She told us where she was born, and of her marriage; that when she left her home, she took five ewe lambs, from which she still perpetuated the breed. She had no children, but loved flowers and pets; she had doves, dogs, cats, lambs, and the horses and cows followed her

as her kittens did. Ah! here, then, was the secret of her flowers; all the maternal instincts which were denied to this childless woman found an outlet in flowers and living creatures. Then she waxed more confidential and took us indoors. The house faced the north, but this sun and beauty loving woman had adapted herself to the conditions; she had made the sunny rear rooms her living-rooms, and had converted the north front rooms that faced the road into a kitchen and woodshed. Thus as we entered the front door, we entered her woodshed, though if we had gone around to the back door, we should have entered her parlor. We were delighted with her sound principles in the art of living. Everything was dainty and neat; the table was prettily laid with glass and silver, the dining-room was separate from the kitchen, a thing so rare to find among country folk. Through her dining-room we passed to her holy of holies, — her museum, she called it. In her cabinet (in common parlance, a closet with glass doors), she kept her most precious china, a sugar bowl one hundred and fifty years old, and a pitcher even more antique. These were relics from her ancestors. In some way she had acquired rare old blue and white china of English make, much prized in curio shops, the worth of which she had recognized by instinct. With much humor she told us how she had been lucky enough to exchange a common white plate

for a beautiful blue and white one owned by a woman who was glad to make the barter. Then she displayed marvellous quilts of many colors, and exhibited considerable mathematical ability in telling us how many squares and pieces each contained. She showed us the fleeces from her sheep, and illustrated how the spinning of yarn was done. She made a graceful picture with her happy face, her curling hair and trim figure, as she moved back and forth in a rhythmic motion at her wheel. Reluctantly did we leave this paradise with its windows opening to the sun, with a splendid view of mountain and valley in the rear of the house. It was a summer idyl to find this simple-hearted woman industriously cultivating her own ideas of beauty, adding what she could to each day, delighting in color, form, and prettiness in her household furnishings, with a keen appreciation of noble scenery ; in short, exercising all the delicate instincts of a fine soul in a restricted and humble environment.

Many times have we revisited this Elysian spot, enough to wear a path through the grass to her garden beds, yet the turf shows no trace, for we journey thither in our thoughts.

UNCUT LEAVES

How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude!
But grant me still a friend in my retreat.

COWPER.

UNCUT LEAVES

THERE were evenings as well as days in the calendar of the Playmates, evenings representing ideal social intercourse; not devoted to frivolous games and childish amusements, but where each contributed the flower of his thought and experience in conversations which dwelt on art, literature, philosophy, and life. There were four participants in these evenings, and an effort was made to have each night outrival the preceding ones in interest. They were begun under the most auspicious circumstances, when tea was served on the lawn, and the table, gay with flowers, was placed where we could watch the setting sun.

What is it about a summer night that defies analysis? One can descant upon the features, the splendor of the sunset, the imperceptible fading light, the gradual descent of the crescent moon behind the trees, the stars appearing one by one in the heavens overhead, the dawning of others at the horizon, the soft west wind, the growing darkness, the silence, the hush; but who can tell of the ineffable charm, the mysterious beauty, the pervading spirit of summer nights, which elude while they

exalt; which stir the soul profoundly, but cannot be conveyed through the grosser channels of speech.

This we felt as we sat one lovely evening out under the stars, which we studied with a powerful field-glass. One of our number had made a study of astronomy, and we listened to the myths relating to the various constellations and single stars as they wheeled slowly before our vision. As it grew darker, we spoke in lower tones, the silences became longer and more eloquent, and our words arose from deeper recesses of the heart; we felt more and more confidence in the sympathy of each other as we expressed our inmost feelings. Under the spell of such a night the barriers are destroyed which hedge the individual about and restrain him from a free and genuine utterance of himself; we come close to each other and understand. While we were under its witchery, one of our guests took up a guitar and interpreted for us what we could not say. He improvised a piece of music which he called the "West Wind." Music is deeper and more searching than words. It etherealizes our most ideal conceptions, it spiritualizes emotions, and is a marvellous fixative to give permanence to fleeting impressions. Many times since, when hearing the "West Wind" played, memory has recalled every detail of the occasion; through its power we recover the delight of that magic evening and relive its incidents.

Later in the season, when we were driven indoors, our musician interpreted many inexpressible things for us, through his delicate perceptions and poetic imagination. When language had gone as far as it could and proved inadequate, the subject of our conversation was continued and reinforced by his music. At other times the poetry we had been reading aloud was the theme for his melody. To stimulate our imagination and add to the effect of the music, we banished lamps from the room, which was only half lit by the moonlight streaming in through the vine-covered, latticed windows. Our unique concerts generally ended with a low lullaby or a serenade, which lent dreaminess and romance to these white nights.

As we each had written more or less, we varied the entertainment with our unpublished manuscripts, interspersing selections from favorite authors with our own contributions. One of our number had written sufficient poetry from time to time to make a volume of verse, and having a flexible, sympathetic voice, she gave us great pleasure by reading from her collection, often telling us the circumstances under which the various poems were written. The public is always interested in the genesis of literature, and particularly of poetry, whose emotional language really betrays so little of the truth, while it seems to disclose so much. The source of poetry is often so remote that to try to

follow it is like tracing a rill to its fountain-head, and like the rill, it frequently springs from unsuspected depths.

The following captivated me by its music and rhythm as well as delicate sentiment, so I have begged permission of the author to use it.

VIOLET

O violet, hear my fervent vow —
No flower to me so dear as thou,
Thy breath so sweet, thine eyes so blue,
Thy smile so meek, thy lips so true;
And thou dost hold in thy pure breast
A secret sweet and unexpressed:
Hush! you and I can ne'er forget —
Ah! violet, dear violet.

One morn I kissed thee, dewy wet,
And sent thee forth, an amulet
For one to wear, if he might guess
Thy hidden wealth of tenderness;
O moment, clasped unto his heart!
I knew, how sure thy mystic art!
Its memory thrills my bosom yet,
Ah! violet, true violet.

One moment, one, and life's best bliss
Was gained and lost. I tell thee this,
Yet hold it close and hold it dear;
Let him alone my secret hear,
In fragrant sighs that breathe so sweet,
A tale my lips can ne'er repeat,
A longing love, a deep regret,
Ah! violet, my violet.

FRANCES M. BROWN.

In these days of sensational and erotic literature, my Playmate dares to be unconventional enough to follow such illustrious examples as Theocritus and Tourguéneff, and write simple and charming idyls. In this vein he is happiest and most successful, as it expresses his natural habit of thought. It was at my solicitation that he contributed a number of idyllic sketches to our Uncut Leaves. I offer one entitled "The Fates," which was suggested by three boulders lying outside of our window.

THE FATES

On the long ridge which the mountain Chocorua left behind in his bold flight toward the clouds, their bulk half embedded in the earth and forming a semicircle, three great boulders sparkle with mica and felspar. In the darkness of the night they gleam white and spectral; or when the moon shines upon them, atoms of false gold glimmer like fairy lanterns. In the night the three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, clothed in loose cloaks whose ragged edges fall over their shoulders like the thatch of the hornet's nest, come and sit upon the flat-topped boulders. There they deliberate upon the destiny of the Flute Player whose cottage is near by. They have been deliberating for many nights, yet they cannot agree, and have settled nothing. Unconscious of their presence, the Flute

Player comes out upon the doorstep of the cottage after supper, surrounded by his boys and girls and his wife, who looks like their elder sister, and he charms the merciless Fates into a merciful mood with his simple music. Far off against the wall of the thick wood Echo hears the last, sweet, long-drawn strain of the flute, and repeats it as if she loved it and would not have it end. The three Fates listen with solemn, imperturbable countenances, but their bosoms are softened as no other mortal has softened them before. The implacable enemies of men are for once stayed in their purpose.

The night wanes on; the cottage is shut; all is peaceful and dim. The crickets at regular intervals utter their cry of "All is well." The protecting shadows of the cottage walls are darker than the night itself; they seem like battlements thrown around it. Towering high above it among the stars, the mountain pinnacle is flanked on either side by white clouds, whose gigantic wings brood over and enfold the ridge and fields of the Flute Player.

The silent flute rests in its place on two nails above the hearth and the mantle, where in the warmth it has grown mellower and sweeter from year to year. It has become like its player; he has imparted to its wood, after many years of breathing his various moods through it, much of his own nature. Should another play a tune upon it, there would still be heard the tone of its owner,

and it would involuntarily render his favorite airs. The Flute Player, who is a farmer by day, has many unfulfilled plans; he wishes to clear his upper field, where already some short, sweet grass grows such as his twelve sheep love to nibble; he longs for a new barn, and to finish two chambers in the eastern and western gables of his cottage, one for his girls and the other for the two boys who are growing too long for the truckle-bed beside their father and mother. He sees no end to the enterprises and improvements which he delights to discuss and forecast: the conquest of wild nature from his houseyard on to right and left, acre by acre; and he thinks not of an end to his labors and his days.

Yet the Fates have arrived, and sit nightly upon the gleaming boulders a few paces from the door, and they, whose mind and deed are always one, are now divided in counsel, and they hesitate to exercise their office. Is it any wonder why? They find, for almost the first time in their wanderings over the earth, Love, Labor, and Happiness, like another three Fates, sitting round about the house and within it, protecting and protesting against intrusion. Labor they might end, and Happiness wound, but Love were difficult to destroy. It charms and disarms even the Fates; it lives and reunites like a spire of flame cut through with a sword.

Is it any wonder, then, that Clotho, who is spinning the thread of the Flute Player's life, looks so imploringly toward Atropos while she continues to spin? But she who holds the fatal shears which clip the thread of human life is impatient.

"Why delay?" she murmurs. "His time has come; his music must cease; his loves and labors end. Why delay, when so many hopeless and friendless souls are waiting, expecting, yea, beseeching our presence?"

"Not yet, not yet!" the others answer, her younger sisters, less inexorable and pitiless than she, and they continue: "Our hearts are softened, and we feel our natures changing as we watch the little cottage with its labors, its love, and its happiness. It may be that life is even better than death. If death be good, why do not we, why do not all the gods die?" The astonished Atropos almost dropped her shears.

Yet for many more nights came the dread sisters, their heads wreathed in wool and narcissus flowers, and kept their vigils on the stony seats, still debating, still delaying. The Flute Player sometimes caught glimpses of them stealing away in the dim gray of the dawn; he thought it but the early mist ascending from the low meadow land and the river. As they passed, a melody arose from all nature; from the fields he cultivated, from his woods, from his garden came the faint and fainter strain, "Life

is better than death; love hath conquered the Fates."

The Flute Player heard in it only the morning carol of the birds, the awakening of the earth, but his heart was lifted up. He labored on; he was happier than ever, and played a higher note.

Softly the Fates moved away, nor returned for many a year.

"Not yet, not yet," they said, "there is something even better than death, where those other three Fates, Love, Labor, and Happiness, can sing their joyful pæans."

When it came my turn to contribute, I tried to beg off, for the others had furnished such a varied entertainment night after night that I feared what I had would not compare favorably with their work. I pleaded the monotonous character of my literary efforts, which consisted chiefly of sonnets addressed to Adam. I should like to suggest to those who have hours of ennui, that there is no surer way of making time fly than by trying to manipulate a sonnet, which is at the same time the most plastic and the most adamant thing in creation. "A sonnet represents the maximum of effort and the minimum of result," writes a witty American. The sonnet commends itself to all classes; to the idler it gives steady employment (I worked one over and over a whole year), to the diffuse it imparts

conciseness, to the purist it affords ample scope for nicely discriminated words. Those who have a hazy, indefinite way of thinking will find stern discipline in being compelled to state their subject in just eighty syllables, and in sixty more to work their theme to a fine climax, and then — stop. Ay! there's the rub. The general experience is that one would like to add just a line of postscript; but the sonnet is inexorable. The thread of its life is spun with that one hundred and fortieth syllable, and having reached it, Atropos snips it off relentlessly. Sonnets cannot be recommended to any but those of healthy and vigorous constitution, as they disturb circulation; the head grows hot, the extremities cold, the appetite flags, the patient becomes abstracted and often morose. Having run its course, the after-effects are particularly to be guarded against, as a sonnet is apt to leave one despondent and peculiarly open to another attack; but the more frequent the attacks become, the sooner does the patient rally, until at length he enjoys a perfect immunity from the evil results, and receives only a keen stimulation from what formerly depressed him.

It was in vain I offered some such remarks as these to divert the attention of my companions from their request. They declared neither apologies nor drones were allowed at Playfield, that our amusements as well as work were coöperative, so I

was forced to yield, and among other things contributed this sonnet.

LOVE'S INSPIRATION

In vain I tell thee in a thousand ways
  How dear thou art, how perfect to my view;
  So poor is language, I must love construe
In finer accents than through tangled maze
Of adjective and oft-repeated phrase;
  I would that Nature might my tongue endue
  With her own eloquence which breathes anew
The old love tale that sets all hearts ablaze.

Winds whisper, rivers to their vales repeat
  The tender vows of plighted flowers and birds;
    Though Nature gives love's simple theme to each,
Divinely varied is their discourse sweet;
  Let me escape the bondage of my words,
    And learn to use the universal speech.

THE ENCHANTED RUG

Each person has felt his own call to cast aside customs, timidities, and limitations, and to be in his place a free and helpful man.

EMERSON.

THE ENCHANTED RUG

Long had I watched the ease and skill of Nature's thaumaturgy, the budding and fulfilment of her projects, and I was filled with longing to work a miracle. "Nature," cried I, "have you not some trifle I can do, some monad to be shaped, or stray petal to be moulded? My heart is set on flashing a dewdrop from a grass-blade, or summoning the spirit to take some visible form. You appear indifferent to many things, you neglect the worm-eaten leaves and the weaklings of your vegetation. Let me make a beginning with these; let me patch and restore; let me be an apprentice under you. I crave only the simplest, elementary work at first, I long to create something — create like you out of nothing."

"Nay," replied Nature, "your hand is too rude to work with my subtile forces. You know only matter in its crudest form and nothing of its essence. Until you learn its properties, learn to combine and analyze its manifestations, to master its difficulties, to give new forms to the old, you cannot share my labors. Practise patiently and reverently the use of material things, and the time

may come when a deeper knowledge of my outward symbols will lead your spirit to the threshold of what you desire. A soul must work its own way to the light."

This message I could not interpret at the time.

Like the first Adam, I was walking in my garden in the cool of the day when I encountered an emissary despatched by Nature and mistook him for a serpent invading my Paradise.

Quoth he, "I believe you have been living some time here in the country; what are you doing?"

"Enjoying life," replied I evasively.

"Yes, one can easily imagine that," said he, looking about, "but what are you doing for the people around you?"

"Nothing, except a little friendly intercourse."

"Nothing," repeated he. "What right have you to live in a remote country place like this and settle down to selfish enjoyment when you might be of use to the people?"

Then was I quite sure he came as a disturber of peace, and I proceeded to put my foot upon his crest.

"I think you scarcely recognize the situation. It is true this community consists of a small, scattered population, but every one owns his own farm, or at least a bit of land. They are law-abiding, self-respecting citizens. I cannot do slum nor reform-

atory work, for there is none of that element. It would be sheer presumption in me to play at saving souls, for they are entitled to their own views of theology and morals as much as I am to mine. I am not rich, so I cannot play Lady Bountiful; I have neither musical nor dramatic talent, so I cannot entertain them; I do not believe in almsgiving and charity any way; and to make a final confession, I delight in the knowledge that fortune has not laid an obligation to my kind upon me by endowing me with talents to be cultivated. Mediocrity permits one to live his own life unquestioned."

He smiled indulgently at my warmth. "Those are only the conventional ways of aiding," rejoined he; "there are others. Each one must find his own work in life, and I am certain there is work you could do if you choose to look for it. I believe each person has his gift, and that he is responsible for its use. If you have not discovered yours, it is time; whether you use it or not is another matter."

"Why do you come to sow seeds of unrest and discontent? You remind me," retorted I flippantly, "of an exhorter who used to inflame a socialistic society twice a month. 'Wherever you see a man,' he used to say, 'who is contented with his lot and steeped in the sloth of happiness, agitate, agitate. That man is a peril to society; he is a block to the wheels of progress. Stir him up, make him restless, do anything to destroy his apathy!'"

"The fact that you defend yourself so vehemently shows you have thought on this matter. Did it ever occur to you, when one lives for others he does not lose his own life, — he enlarges it?"

"Well," said I, making a sudden surrender, "what would you have me do? I am one of your representative individuals with a hypothetical talent buried and mouldering in a napkin. Mark out a career for me."

"I happen to know a talent," said he, "which you have long cultivated. You have used it successfully for yourself; place it at the disposal of the community."

I beamed on him at the unexpected compliment. "This is a pleasant turn to the conversation. I shall do far more for you if you flatter me than if you scold me. Name my unsuspected gift."

"You have been successful as a designer; you have had considerable artistic training; give the benefit to your neighbor."

"To whom do you expect me to proclaim the abstract truths of æsthetics?" inquired I derisively, "to the man in the hayfield, or the housewife over the washtub? or shall I choose for my audience a group of men as they mend the roads on a summer's day? I fancy my exhortations on form and color would be highly regaling; they would make refreshing breaks in a day of toil. I thought you were about to suggest something practical."

"I am no dreamer," protested he. "You do not realize the opportunities that await a trained artist or an experienced craftsman in such a community as this. On every hand you will find men and women who could be taught some handicraft that would not only be profitable, but a source of great joy and education to the worker. Take for example hand-made furniture; the reason antique furniture is so much sought after is because most of it is hand-made, and therefore durable and individual. There are no glued joinings and simulated carvings. It is honestly and lovingly wrought. There is no reason why this should become a lost art. Hand-made furniture cannot be made profitably in cities under present conditions; but where living is cheap and labor can be obtained at reasonable prices, as in villages, chairs, tables, and chests of fine workmanship can be made which will appeal to people of means and taste."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, "I see your drift. Instead of working under a manufacturer who clips his designer's wings to please the capricious whims of a half educated public, you suggest that the designer should become a manufacturer, create a market for his handiwork among the cultivated classes, and thus set the pace instead of following it."

"That is my idea exactly," replied he. "Nor is furniture the only field open; wood may be used in many forms, — carvings, turned wood, and poker

work both in wood and leather; there is metal work of all kinds from wrought iron to hammered brass, from repoussé to etching and niello work."

At all these I shook my head. "I do not know enough to undertake any one of these, although I have dabbled in some of them. What else is there?"

"Oh! many more, — tapestries, hand-woven fabrics, embroideries, basket and bead work, all kinds of decorative leather goods, woven floor-coverings; why, take the one thing all native New England women make, — hooked rugs. I think if a little art were infused into them, they could be made a valuable product, for they are certainly durable."

"Yes," said I reflectively, "there is room for improvement in hooked rugs. I never could understand why they were made so needlessly ugly. I have seen them in various places by the coast as well as inland; they are all alike in their crude coloring and commonplace designs. But they are undeniably durable; I know of some that have been in use over thirty years."

"This may be your work," said he, strolling beyond the gate. "I am sure you will solve your personal problem, and perhaps some time you will have definite results to show me."

I wished to detain him longer, to learn more, but Nature's emissaries only drop seed — and leave the growth to her.

As I turned back and saw the cottage nestling

low among the trees, the drowsy chirp of crickets and the shadows falling long upon the grass made it a veritable house of content. Why disturb its peace and invade its sweet silences with traffic and commerce?

"Nay," mused I, "I am willing that others should promote philanthropies and found industries, enlarge their neighbors' lives, and weave trig laurel crowns to fit their small brows; for my part, it is enough to be an example of modest contentment with a humble life." In short, I rambled on as other smug Pharisees are wont to do, and noted not as I passed within the gates that, on either hand, unperceived, stood an angel with flaming sword barring all return to my quiet Paradise. Already was Eve driven forth into the world of unrest and progress.

For months I played and coquetted with the industrial theory, one day protesting against the folly of attempting any additional work when life was already overflowing with interests; the next discussing ways and means "*if* I undertake it." Later, my conjunction took the more definite form *when.* The world of human endeavor divides itself for me into two parts, — work that is hopelessly beyond my capacity and that which I fancy myself able to do better than it is usually done. The latter class, while rapidly diminishing as I grow older, is still unduly large, for, with all my seeming con-

servatism, I have seasons when I wish to reconstruct everything, and this mood destroys the integrity of my judgment. The message in the garden had inflated my self-confidence until I came to look upon myself as one chosen to promulgate new truths. I did not stop to question my fitness, for had I not received the commission from one high in authority? Had I not in former years achieved the technicalities of eight different kinds of practical designing and found a ready market for my sketches? Had I not drawn from childhood and worked in the various mediums of water, china, oil, and fresco colors? That I had never seen a rug executed, and had merely heard the process described, seemed of no consequence; nor did my absolute ignorance of dyeing daunt me. Such trifles could be soon mastered. I stood ready to rush into all sorts of things where archangels would have feared to tread. With a community wishing home employment on the one hand and an enthusiast eager to advise and reform on the other, nothing seemed easier than to fuse the two into an immediate and successful enterprise.

The forest and wayside began to wear a different aspect. They were no longer habitations of the spirit; they were commodities that would yield their secrets to me. The crimson thyrsus of the sumach, the superb yellow of the goldenrod, the cinnamon browns of ferns excited me. How did

Nature secure these hues? Were her colors fast? Where was her laboratory, and what were her mordants? I revelled in color as never before. I saw combinations that filled me with despair. What beautiful mysteries lay on every hand awaiting the touch of an alchemist! I knew not what hour they would reveal themselves, nor what the disclosures would be. I did not wish manuals of dyeing; I preferred to learn for myself and be my own textbook. During intervals between our meals the kitchen stove was covered with vessels of all sizes, with brews and stews of every description. The queerest odors rose from my altar to the new god whom I was worshipping in vain.

Meanwhile my imagination ran riot. I saw charming pictures of children in gay attire gathering herbs and barks for me; chubby forms dotting the green landscape like huge peonies of red and yellow and blue. I pictured happy homes of contented workers, I heard snatches of song over the work, and gay jest. Everything was beautiful, and I talked incessantly of the project. One day a neighbor of mine, a shrewd farmer, said: "When I see more result and less talk, I shall have some confidence in your scheme."

In an instant my dreams were in a heap at my feet; not the smallest bubble of illusion was left. I realized that the volume of my chatter had committed me to take some definite action or acknow-

ledge myself defeated. I was overwhelmed with the grim outlines of responsibilities that rose up in place of the beautiful mirage that I had so long followed. But if it took work instead of dreams to bring events to pass, then work it should be — but defeat — never!

I shall not detail the thorns that sprang up in my path at every step, my tedious experiments with various materials to obtain a velvety texture; the humiliating defeats and gradual successes in dyeing; the prejudice and antagonism I encountered from many whom I sought to aid; the slow and difficult problem of securing a uniform product from different hands. These difficulties which at first seemed insurmountable only goaded me into more determined effort. But my experiences will not avail another, for each soul must work its own way to the light; each soul must learn its own use of substance and matter before it can aspire to higher endeavors. So long was the way and so slow the ascent, I scarcely recognized it when the supposably worthless hooked rug proved itself an enchanted carpet that had lifted me into a new world, where I not only had an enlarged outlook on many things undreamed of before, but where it gave me extended opportunities in various directions to serve others. First commending itself to a small local public, it followed a natural growth until it was found necessary to give it a formal name; and now the Abnákee

rug has protean forms in floor-coverings and wall-hangings, in jewelled effects and heraldic devices, in chair and cushion covers. It has received recognition in the great cities, and has won a distinctive place for itself in the estimation of the rug-hungry public.

My earliest reward was the opinion expressed by a wise old native philosopher who visited my first public exhibition. On being asked what he thought of the rugs he said slowly, "Wal, — I think two things, — first, I think they 're pretty, and second, I think they 're good; and when a thing is both pretty and good, it 's wuth havin'."

In the course of time my protégé began to have quite a vogue, and its success attracted the attention of a Fifth Avenue house, which wished to control the agency in New York. The interview which took place showed that an industry is capable of many interpretations.

"I have seen your rugs at a recent exhibition," said the proprietor, "and admired them so much that I thought I should like to arrange some terms with you, as I think I could use them to advantage."

I thanked him modestly. "Perhaps you can do more with them than you think," suggested I. "They are attracting much attention everywhere; magazines and newspapers are giving accounts of them and spreading their reputation; the art schools are considering the work as a handicraft

that may be taught in the class-room, and I am in hopes that others will take up the work and give it an individual touch while extending it in various communities, and all this will awaken public interest."

I saw a quizzical look come over his face, and knew I had taken a false step. "I think all this exploiting of the matter very questionable," said he.

"Why, no," explained I. "Before I took it up, such work had never found a market, and it is necessary to create one — to call attention to it."

"But," said he, "in so doing you also call the attention of other workers to it, and before you have a chance to reap the profit others will step in and take it from you."

"That is what I wish," protested I. "I do not want to control it. I have been experimenting a few years, and have proven that it offers a new form of employment both for the worker and the director of the enterprise. I have ample proofs of its success, but I do not wish to protect it. I should like others to share it."

He eyed me critically. "I — I am not sure I understand you," said he. "You do not mean to say that having done all this experimental work, and having reached the point where you could make something out of it, you are willing to turn it over to others? Where do *you* come out on it?"

"I don't come out anywhere. I did not go into

it to come out," said I, growing incoherent under his incredulous smile. I realized at that moment I was a hopelessly impracticable visionary in his opinion and my position indefensible.

"I undertook to show that this work had merit. I have proven my point, that is all I want. I have proven, too, that it is a handicraft that is admirably suited to remote rural districts where employment is seldom to be found, and I should like many such districts to reap the benefit. Besides, personally, I have got a great deal out of it, far more than I expected, or can tell you." And then I hesitated.

He would not understand the joy I had found in surmounting my difficulties, nor the sense of added power and insight into spiritual things that had come with days of toil and nights of questioning. He would probably disbelieve me if I told him I had quite forgotten self-interest and physical exhaustion in my concentrated purpose. I could not speak to him of my desire to work a miracle, to create out of nothing, and that Nature had led me a little nearer to the way she works when she sent a new design into my mind, a faint, fleeting fancy that slowly took a definite mental form which grew into more and more tangible shape, first as a rough drawing on paper, then as a finished pattern, later on marked out for working, until at last my thought lay before me a finished rug, a creation of the tan-

gible from the intangible. I could not explain how I had come to welcome fresh problems that taxed my utmost ingenuity in that they gave my new-found powers more scope; and that when I played with my dyes and mordants, studying the forces that expressed themselves in affinity and repulsion, that while I was outwardly toiling and groaning over the dye kettle, I was in reality a magician calling new forms and colors into being. No, we had no common language to discuss these themes, so I merely repeated: —

"I cannot tell you all that I have got out of my industry, but it has been a great privilege and education to me to have worked as I have. I began the work for the sake of others, and I am glad to have any one reap the benefit. I doubt if I shall lose anything, no matter what others gain."

"I confess," responded he, "I can scarcely grasp your point of view. In commercial life we look out so sharply for ourselves that we are apt to forget there are others. It is very good of you to work with disinterested motives, but I see so little of it that at first I quite misunderstood the situation."

"I do not wish to leave the impression with you that I am posing as a benefactor, because I am not. The circumstances of my life and my inclinations happened to be favorable to the making of this small experiment, and I have simply used the opportunity."

Although he grasped my hand very cordially as he bowed me out, I felt we had not spanned the gulf that lay between us.

"How much of a plant have you?" inquired a wholesaler to whom I had gone for dyestuffs.

"Plant?" repeated I, unprepared for the question. "I suppose you think I have a factory, where my industry is carried on."

"Yes," he replied, "how much of an establishment is it?"

I laughed in spite of myself as I made a hasty mental review of my small equipment. I had been so overwhelmed with the magnitude of the work that I had never considered my inadequate appliances.

"You can't imagine how funny your question is, nor how embarrassing to answer. I suppose you imagine a big brick building, full of operatives, with furnaces and vats, tall chimneys belching smoke and cinders; perhaps your imagination supplies heavy drays, backing up to receive and discharge bales of merchandise. If you can stretch your imagination considerably more and visualize a little, low cottage up a long lane set among trees and shrubbery on a green lawn, with not a neighbor in sight nor within half a mile — that is my plant."

"How curious!" he ejaculated. "Where do the operatives live?"

"There are none, strictly speaking. As I have

orders to be executed, I send to various workers within a radius of six miles. A worker comes, receives materials and instructions; she makes the rug in her own home during her leisure hours, and brings it back when completed. I suppose it will seem fanciful to a business man, but we think that work lovingly and honestly wrought by hand under conditions not profaned by noise, confinement, and starvation wages carries an atmosphere of peace and rest that makes it of additional value to the purchaser. Many letters have I received after sending rugs to purchasers in which they say, 'I find them so restful.'"

He looked at me much as the Fifth Avenue man had done — half critically and wholly puzzled.

Adam and I often speculated on the final outcome of my project, and what its influence would be on those who had expressed so much interest in it.

"I have one hope that I cherish above all others," said I one evening.

"What is that?" inquired Adam.

"It is that the attention of some prospective philanthropist will be awakened to see individual avenues for his generosity."

"Do you want to set the millionnaire to making rugs?" asked he mischievously.

"No," said I seriously, for I cannot take a jest when my pet theories are under discussion. "But

each successful rural industry emphasizes the value of giving employment to isolated communities. Anything that will keep the youth distributed over the country and prevent them from crowding into the cities has a double advantage. Let us take for an example a rich man sprung from some small village wishing to honor his birthplace with a gift. It usually takes the form of a library, reading-room, museum, or a hospital. These are excellent, and secure to the people a permanent good with the least possible care or responsibility to the donor. I claim in many cases it would be wiser to find work for the inhabitants than to erect a memorial building. True, it involves much personal study of social conditions to determine what industry could be introduced most advantageously, but the intimate relation that springs from the personal contact of a large-hearted and generous man with village affairs would stimulate public spirit far more than any charitable institution could do. Once founded, such a memorial would continue a blessing long after the projector's name was forgotten. Nor would the founding of an industry involve any great outlay. Having once secured the services of an able director who had received a thorough artistic training, and supplied with suitable machinery and materials, the industry should soon become self-supporting. One thing is necessary besides equipment, and that is a market for the work produced.

To obtain this, both the name and influence of a rich man would be valuable aids."

"In short," interrupted Adam, "you would expect him to stand behind his protégé and be prepared to play the fairy godfather."

"That is my idea," pursued I. "He should give the work, whatever it be, full equipment, and foster it until it became self-supporting. Time and capital are necessary to place an industry on a sound financial basis. In time he might find it advantageous to establish an art school in a small way, and secure lecturers who would address the villagers on the practical application of the simpler laws of beauty and of art to daily life. This might be supplemented by popular addresses on hygienic living and kindred subjects. In this way he could contribute to the welfare of his native town without the sting of almsgiving or of charity. Once established, the project might take many forms. As workers became proficient and earned money, they might be allowed to hold shares; or those who showed marked aptitude for the work might be given special training, and through the influence of the fairy godfather be made directors of like enterprises elsewhere. There is no limit to the things that might grow out of industries that were liberally and intelligently conducted."

"Dreaming again?" asked Adam softly. "Well, dream on, my dear. The world owes as much to the dreamer as to the worker."

In my Playmate alone did I find full comprehension and encouragement. Often my self-confidence — and it takes much of this quality to run an industry — failed me. Then he alone knew how to restore me, also how to restrain me; now with check, and now with spur he gave me complete sympathy. To him alone could I confide the spiritual insights that came during the passive hours given to the delicate process of dyeing. When material things crowded so close that they suffocated me, we soared away on the wings of the enchanted rug, away where matter, men, and markets did not exist.

A CHAPTER IN WHITE

The wood is bare; a river mist is steeping
The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves.
Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping
Over their fallen leaves.

Yet here it was we walked when ferns were springing,
And through the mossy bank shot bud and blade;
Here found in summer, when the birds were singing,
A green and pleasant shade.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

A CHAPTER IN WHITE

EACH summer we spent at Playfield made us more and more attached to it. Each year we went a little earlier and stayed a few weeks later. During our absence, we pined for its beautiful solitude and silence. We associated it with perpetual sunshine, with summer skies and green fields. If one of the Playmates looked abstractedly at a spot in the carpet for five minutes, the other would say; "I know where you are. You are taking a stroll about Playfield;" and he was always compelled to acknowledge the impeachment. Daily we made pilgrimages to our shrine, and much of our conversation was occupied with this dear theme.

Our reluctance to leave one autumn was so great that we determined to lend variety to existence by spending the winter in the mountains. We would experiment, and if it proved uncomfortable, we knew we could flee at any time. If life were furnished with more of these provisional loopholes, mankind would find its lot more tolerable. It is grim necessity with no alternative that makes any experience irksome.

One by one the colony of summer residents left

us, and as we announced to them our intention of remaining, their manner clearly indicated but one opinion. "It may be all very well for you two, who are used to living in solitude, but for us, we could not think of such a thing."

To which I would make reply when we were alone, "Of course, my dear, those people would not care to stay; they have no one such as you to amuse them."

With brief eloquence he would answer, "Yes, that single condition makes all the difference in the world." Which, being interpreted, means that when two people find everything that constitutes the joy of life in each other, the geographical location of the four walls which inclose them is of small consequence.

We were really disconcerted by the manner of the country folk when we announced to them our decision. Without exception they laughed in a peculiarly significant way (much as they had done when consulted about the yellow wasps), which aroused our suspicion as to the wisdom of the plan. They hinted we should try it but once. So it was with many misgivings we made preparations for a long, severe winter. We laid in provisions to tide us over six months at least. We calculated that the worst snow blockade could scarcely continue longer than that period.

One takes much more delight in the changes of autumn if he is not preparing for flight in the midst of it. To observe nature to advantage, the association with it must have some degree of continuance and permanence. We felt this difference in our attitude of former years toward the autumn as the days came and went, in that we were free to enjoy each passing change. We realized that much of the pleasure of our experiment consisted in noting the novelties presented by each advancing week. We were delighted to see a second growth of buttercups, violets, wild strawberries, and even cinnamon roses, as late as October. We had flowers in our garden during October, and continued to use the vegetable garden until December. The unexpected views obtained by the falling of leaves gave us great pleasure; it made virtually new landscapes. Day by day we watched half fearfully, yet expectantly, for winter changes, but October and November passed, bringing no terrors in their train. We did not know what to look for, and became impatient for something to happen. As the ragged little gamin said, when some one inquired why he read the yellow-backed novel: "It 's the 'orrible oncertainties wot we craves for."

It was with disappointment that we saw December arrive, and so far from being buried in drifts to the eaves as we had expected, there was not a snowflake on the ground. The weather continued

clear and exhilarating. As we walked daily to the mail, we watched the fate of the brook that flowed across the road down into the woods. Little by little the film of ice at the edges extended and stiffened into a crust, leaving open places where the current was swift. A few days later, the small cascades were inclosed within crystal walls, but we could still see the water flowing beneath. Gradually the walls thickened and the sound which at first was a tinkle became more and more muffled and remote. The music of this far-away sound is indescribable; it appealed not to the ear but to the imagination. Listening, one forgot the woods, the bare frozen ground; he was carried away to the realm of unimaginable delights. We hearkened to the pulse of its life growing fainter and fainter, until one day the voice was hushed. We stood in silence as if we witnessed the death of a human being, and said softly, "It is dead," and walked on feeling a vague sense of loss.

At length the snow fell, and with its coming we experienced agreeable surprises. The hemlocks and pines that had grown to be familiar friends wore a masquerade costume, through which we could scarcely recognize them. Bending under their snowy burdens, the branches swept downwards and closed in upon us everywhere, as the walls of a building. One fancied he was walking through the flies of a vast theatre, and the trees

were a part of the stage properties. It was theatrical and showy; it was as if nature had provided this scenery as the stage setting for an elfin play. This is one of the marvels of nature, that it requires so slight a change from our accustomed view to make an object weird and unearthly. By a trifling difference in direction of the boughs, and the addition of white properly distributed, the landscape which we had observed a thousand times was wholly unrecognizable.

The same thing is illustrated in somewhat different manner in the pine cone, which we never look upon as allied in any way to flowers; but compare a zinnia with a pine cone, and the petals of one closely resemble the scales of the other, with this distinction that the petals of the zinnia spring from a horizontal disc, while the scales are grouped in a more vertical manner. The differences of color, texture, and arrangement separate them in our minds as widely as if they did not belong to the same kingdom.

One characteristic of a winter scene is that it gives emphasis to various objects by isolation. Against a snowy background, what a distinctive value the seed vessels of plants acquire! In the luxuriance of autumn, we cannot properly observe their form or color; but now, every twig and dried stalk have a singular interest, and inconspicuous objects acquire prominence. We have ample opportunity to enjoy the rich reds and yellows of the

blackberry and willow stems, the tan and brown of tree-trunks, and the warm, rosy tinge of the white birch tops. The russet leaves of oaks and beeches bleach into a light tan or a cream color, as if to maintain the harmony in white. Seed vessels contribute dainty touches to the foreground in the fawn tones of the dried goldenrod, in the star-shaped calyces of the blackberry and asters, and the rounded crowns of the daisy. A dash of red is furnished in the thyrsus of the sumach, and warm browns in the miniature cones of the alder, the fruit of the witch hazel and spirea. Another striking characteristic of a winter picture is its delicacy of tone. The tree-trunks lose that hard brown, almost blackish hue of summer, and blend with the soft blue sky and the dull grayish green that the pine has assumed in place of the vivid green of summer. The pine is mellowed still more by the snow lodged in blossom-like patches on each small twig, through which the needles pierce as if they were stamens emerging from a white corolla.

In studying Japanese ornament, it is readily seen how much use they have made of the snow, but they have by no means exhausted the subject. Using their broad treatment, fine suggestions await the decorator on every hand. For example, the small snow-covered branches just mentioned make a charming all-over pattern for textiles. I saw also another beautiful motif in a very ornamental grass

which bore clusters of tawny panicles. These formed a natural distribution over the surface of the snow, and irregularly scattered among them were the footprints of some bird which had come to eat the dried awns. Altogether it looked like an enlarged plate taken from a book of Japanese decorative art. With a fine instinct the Japanese isolate an ornament to bring out its artistic value, exhibiting but one article of virtu at a time. In this they so resemble Nature's method of emphasizing the neglected portions of her handiwork in winter, that we almost suspect they derived their hint from her. Very interesting is the fuzz of the clematis decorating bushes and trees in midwinter, and the fibrous rootlets of the grass that are laid bare at the edge of a bank at the roadside are humble things we scorn in the wealth of summer and autumn.

For the rainbow of warmer days Nature substitutes the nacreous colors reflected in the ice at sunset. Those who have not seen such effects have no idea how prodigal Nature is in the use of color to give relief to the expanse of white; sometimes rosy or azure, sometimes violet, yellow, or pale sea green, sometimes all of these, so that every pond or bit of ice becomes a gleaming opalescent gem. When you add to this the ineffable golden sunsets, pure and penetrating as a sound, the mountains nearest the sun transfigured and apparently rarefied with an

amethyst glow against the radiant sky, and those in the distance assuming every conceivable shade of purple, violet, lilac, blue, and rose, the trees bathed in a warm rose brown or pencilled in a velvety black against the peachblow tones of the northern or eastern sky, you feel you have never before seen true brilliancy of color; that compared with this glory, the forests and fields of summer pale into insignificance. Yet this is but one phase of the panorama; there is as great a variety of effects as in midsummer. At times the mountains wear the soft blue haze of August, other times they are purple and threatening, boding a storm, or a bright blue in crisp cool weather; again brown and dreary, or white and misty when veiled in a snowstorm. One never tires of this diversity.

The winter that had been half dreaded turned out to be the most enjoyable and instructive I ever spent. We "could catch the pace of the seasons, and had leisure to attend to every phenomena of nature, and to entertain every thought that came" to us. It is not necessary to grow specific, and record where the thermometer stood, as the Playmates have a neat method of their own in registration. They hang their thermometer in the sun, and do not consult it except when the sun shines upon it. Like the sun-dial, it numbers no hours but the serene — and warm.

I am half tempted to enlarge upon the delicious

quality of the New Hampshire climate in winter, its softness, the number of bright days, the wonderful light in the sky, the invigoration of the air. I believe the time will come when invalids will seek this region because of its equable, moderate temperature. I know nothing equal to it elsewhere; for though there are other places that are milder, this advantage is offset by an excess of rain and cloudy weather. Those places which have perhaps as many clear days suffer either extreme cold or drought. This climate combines the blandness of New York city with the clear, invigorating weather of the Northwest. I presume this condition does not exist throughout the State, as our situation is peculiarly favorable, in that the mountains and foothills of Maine on the east shelter us from the dreaded coast storms, and the Sandwich and White Mountain ranges on the north and west cut off the inland storms and cold waves that are bred in the Lake region and Canada, so that in our vicinity we have only our own weather to contend with.

The tracks in the snow, those friendly proofs of amicable relations sustained between us and our untamed neighbors, were a fruitful source of speculation. Rabbit and squirrel tracks, with which we were familiar, did not interest us so much, but others too numerous to describe excited our curiosity. We did not seek to know what animal made them, we preferred to imagine them the footprints of rare

species that had come to pay their respects to us; or those of birds with gorgeous plumage and strange note, too shy to appear in person, but each in its own cipher had left a message for us, in token of a visit to our retreat. We liked to think of them as timid visitants who were content to love us unseen. Nature had a kindly way of perpetuating the memory of their passage, for though their footprints were first engraved in the snow, as the snow melted away and receded, the prints were left raised and embossed on the surface.

In this discursive narrative I have sought to show how people of limited means, but with an unlimited capital of idealism and self-helpfulness, can live an idyllic life in isolated retirement where there is light and space enough for the soul to expand, where one can listen to the dictates of his own needs, where he is free to work out the problem of his own self-development and growth. Such a life gives a buoyancy of spirits that is incompatible with the environments of a city.

Outside my window stands a parable concerning cities. Admiring a beautiful pine-tree at the edge of the wood, we decided to cut away the trees to give it more prominence, but on examination, we found early in life it had formed a close intimacy with a maple-tree. Under favorable circumstances a maple-tree offers the best possible society, but in this case, recognizing the difficulties attendant upon

intimate friendship, each had sought to outdo the other in the concessions made, and the result was that on the side where they met in their daily intercourse, both the maple and the pine were undeveloped and had no branches. If we stripped away the maple, it would disclose what an abnormal and one-sided tree the pine had become. In like manner in the social world, to avoid friction, men have tacitly agreed to yield almost everything that distinguishes one individual from another. Unless a man thinks, acts, and talks as his neighbors, he is accounted difficult and aggressive. In conventional society, the result is that a colorless uniformity replaces interesting variety. It is an exact representation of a dense undergrowth of saplings, in which it is impossible to distinguish the oak from the beech, the maple from the ash ; it is merely an assemblage of monotonous little trunks. Human beings as well as trees demand freedom and space to develop symmetry. The inward life requires a certain amount of isolation and silence to manifest itself and to maintain its poise, and for the cultivation of those spiritual resources which give continual stimulus to the soul. It cannot allow the close encroachment of social traditions, conventions, and prejudices without suffering a distinct loss of power. It is pitiful when we consider that men have permitted manners, which were primarily designed to contribute a beautiful enamel or finish to

society, to harden into absurd and cruel bonds that crush the soul under the weight of the pettiest and meanest details. It is pitiful to reflect that in the midst of a world resplendent with beauty, rich in truths, full of marvels and mysteries, the thoughts of countless intelligent human beings endowed with minds to grasp these things are —

> "Blind to the magic,
> And deaf to the melody,"

are wholly absorbed and preoccupied with such trivialities as the details of personal adornment; the arrangement and precise use of the endless items that enter into the modern ménage; the cruel social distinctions which discriminate against one in favor of another; the small-talk, the personalities, criticism, and scandal which pervade all classes from the laundry to the drawing-room. With no apparent sense of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities, multitudes discuss with the utmost gravity the most trifling details of social functions; they moot the vexed subject of the various uses and proper size and number of bits of cardboard that shall represent the individual, and deliberate, as if they were eternal questions, on the number of buttons that shall decorate a man's waistcoat, the cut of his trousers, the shape of his hat, the critical moment when a frock coat becomes a solecism and when the sherry should give place to champagne.

You perceive that man has only exchanged his shells, his glass beads, and his war-paint for equally worthless gewgaws, and is not as far removed from honest, unpretentious savagery as he thinks he is. The exacting mandates of arbitrary and self-appointed social dictators are no sooner established than they are contradicted and set aside by other autocrats; nevertheless, those who revolt against their fluctuating decrees are ostracized and consigned to oblivion. These are severe indictments, but let each judge of their truth from his own experience and observation.

To the thoughtful mind, the question becomes a very serious one, How can the individual preserve the full exercise of his higher nature under the steady encroachment of those all-important trifles, even if he refuses to surrender to them? How can he continue to be a symmetrical pine when not only one but many propinquitous maples are forever interfering with his convictions, and curtailing his freedom, reinforcing their narrow restrictions with those nameless terrors, Public Opinion and Duty to Society. How can he hold his soul aloof and prevent it becoming stifled and dwarfed by the constant pressure of momentous artificialities that are forced upon him? I know of none who are strong enough to resist the insidious, benumbing influence without periods of intercourse with nature some time during life to serve as a corrective.

Over these years of sunshine and happiness has floated but one cloud of sadness. A former owner of this hilltop revisited it. He was long past middle age, and many years had elapsed since he had labored in these fields. It was he who had planted the orchard, now decayed, and had tried to bring the wild acres into grasslands. He it was who had laboriously built many of the stone walls about the place. In the mean time his wife had died and he had but recently married the stolid, unattractive woman who accompanied him. Unobserved, I watched him as his eyes wandered wistfully about the living-room, seeking in vain for some trace of former days. There was nothing left of his period; we had taken pains to remove all suggestions of previous occupants. We took him to our gardens, and he remarked that his had been in another place. When with pride we showed him our young grafted fruit, he told of the long years he too had waited for his orchard to grow. He asked if he might look at his old orchard, and lovingly he touched the gnarled trunks; also he sought out his garden plot, now grown up to grass, his eyes growing more and more wistful when he saw even the fields were changed, that nothing familiar was left.

I then showed him the improvements we had made in the house, in which he took little interest, his mind was so busy with his memories. As we entered the dining-room, he said: "This was our

kitchen, and that was where we slept," pointing to a small room we had converted into a guest chamber. He sighed, as he continued, "It is many years since I lived here. It is all changed. I was very happy then; I think I spent the happiest years of my life on this farm, though I worked hard and had so little. I have often thought of this place and wanted to come back to it, — but — it is not as it was."

As I watched him with pitying interest, a sudden fear smote me. Ah, is not this the fate of those who build their homes and happiness on the shifting sands of human life? Shall I too live to see our beloved Playfield pass from our hands, and drawn by the ties of tender memories that endeared it, shall I return to find it in the possession of indifferent strangers, living their own lives, oblivious of all that it once was to us?

I had to turn away to hide my tears.

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